

Central Finance Office First Steps Family Survey

Statewide Summary

Total surveys mailed out: 3327

Total surveys returned: 1023

1. How old is your child?						
126 (12.32%) Less than one year	268 (26.20%) 1 yr - less than 2 yrs	538 (52.59%) 2 yrs - less than 3 yrs	90 (8.80%) 3 years and over	1 (0.10%) Did not answer		
2. At what age did your child first begin receiving First Steps services?						
530 (51.81%) Less than one year	269 (26.30%) 1 yr - less than 2 yrs	206 (20.14%) 2 yrs - less than 3 yrs	0 (0.00%) 3 years and over	18 (1.76%) Did not answer / did not know		
4. It was easy to learn about First Steps, to find out if my child was eligible for services, and to obtain the early intervention services that are needed for my child and family.						
424 (41.45%) Strongly Agree	447 (43.70%) Agree	89 (8.70%) Disagree	46 (4.50%) Strongly Disagree	5 (0.49%) I Do Not Know	8 (0.78%) Does Not Apply	4 (0.39%) Did not answer
5. When my child was evaluated, all concerns about my child's development raised by me and others were addressed.						
644 (62.95%) Strongly Agree	340 (33.24%) Agree	26 (2.54%) Disagree	5 (0.49%) Strongly Disagree	2 (0.20%) I Do Not Know	5 (0.49%) Does Not Apply	1 (0.10%) Did not answer
6. The results of my child's assessments or evaluations were explained to me in ways I understood.						
650 (63.54%) Strongly Agree	348 (34.02%) Agree	14 (1.37%) Disagree	1 (0.10%) Strongly Disagree	3 (0.29%) I Do Not Know	5 (0.49%) Does Not Apply	2 (0.20%) Did not answer
7. I received information and explanations about our family's legal rights (such as due process, procedural safeguards, child complaints).						
533 (52.10%) Strongly Agree	346 (33.82%) Agree	56 (5.47%) Disagree	13 (1.27%) Strongly Disagree	47 (4.59%) I Do Not Know	22 (2.15%) Does Not Apply	6 (0.59%) Did not answer
8. I creating our Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP), I am asked about areas where our family feels things are fine and where we feel we need help.						
683 (66.76%) Strongly Agree	313 (30.60%) Agree	11 (1.08%) Disagree	1 (0.10%) Strongly Disagree	7 (0.68%) I Do Not Know	5 (0.49%) Does Not Apply	2 (0.20%) Did not answer
9. We receive all the services listed in our Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP).						
666 (65.10%) Strongly Agree	279 (27.27%) Agree	25 (2.44%) Disagree	18 (1.76%) Strongly Disagree	20 (1.96%) I Do Not Know	8 (0.78%) Does Not Apply	7 (0.68%) Did not answer
10. I feel the service coordinator and the early intervention providers listen to me and respect me.						
719 (70.28%) Strongly Agree	263 (25.71%) Agree	25 (2.44%) Disagree	9 (0.88%) Strongly Disagree	5 (0.49%) I Do Not Know	0 (0.00%) Does Not Apply	2 (0.20%) Did not answer
11. Our family routinely uses the help of our service coordinator.						
323 (31.57%) Strongly Agree	427 (41.74%) Agree	171 (16.72%) Disagree	43 (4.20%) Strongly Disagree	14 (1.37%) I Do Not Know	40 (3.91%) Does Not Apply	5 (0.49%) Did not answer
12. Our service coordinator helps my family, in a timely way, get the services we need.						
515 (50.34%) Strongly Agree	390 (38.12%) Agree	51 (4.99%) Disagree	26 (2.54%) Strongly Disagree	14 (1.37%) I Do Not Know	23 (2.25%) Does Not Apply	4 (0.39%) Did not answer
13. The people who work with my child know a lot about my child's disability and how to work with him/her.						
680 (66.47%) Strongly Agree	295 (28.84%) Agree	23 (2.25%) Disagree	9 (0.88%) Strongly Disagree	7 (0.68%) I Do Not Know	7 (0.68%) Does Not Apply	2 (0.20%) Did not answer
14. Early intervention services give my family ways to improve my child's development.						
784 (76.64%) Strongly Agree	210 (20.53%) Agree	10 (0.98%) Disagree	3 (0.29%) Strongly Disagree	5 (0.49%) I Do Not Know	9 (0.88%) Does Not Apply	2 (0.20%) Did not answer
15. I receive information and explanations about the services my child needs and believe the services my child and family receive are appropriate.						
680 (66.47%) Strongly Agree	290 (28.35%) Agree	31 (3.03%) Disagree	6 (0.59%) Strongly Disagree	7 (0.68%) I Do Not Know	8 (0.78%) Does Not Apply	1 (0.10%) Did not answer
16. Early intervention services staff show respect for my family's ethnic and cultural background.						
629 (61.49%) Strongly Agree	233 (22.78%) Agree	3 (0.29%) Disagree	1 (0.10%) Strongly Disagree	10 (0.98%) I Do Not Know	143 (13.98%) Does Not Apply	4 (0.39%) Did not answer

17. Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) meetings are scheduled at a time and place that are convenient for me and my family.

717 (70.09%)	261 (25.51%)	10 (0.98%)	6 (0.59%)	9 (0.88%)	16 (1.56%)	4 (0.39%)
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	I Do Not Know	Does Not Apply	Did not answer

18. Early intervention services have increased my family's capacity to enhance my child's development.

754 (73.70%)	231 (22.58%)	10 (0.98%)	2 (0.20%)	10 (0.98%)	12 (1.17%)	4 (0.39%)
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	I Do Not Know	Does Not Apply	Did not answer

19. Over the past year, First Steps services have helped me and/or my family:

a. Work and play together in a normal fashion even though we have a child with special needs.

573 (56.01%)	305 (29.81%)	18 (1.76%)	2 (0.20%)	11 (1.08%)	100 (9.78%)	12 (1.17%)
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	I Do Not Know	Does Not Apply	Did not answer

b. Feel more confident in my skills as a parent/guardian.

612 (59.82%)	306 (29.91%)	29 (2.83%)	3 (0.29%)	4 (0.39%)	57 (5.57%)	12 (1.17%)
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	I Do Not Know	Does Not Apply	Did not answer

c. Understand my child's needs.

654 (63.93%)	293 (28.64%)	27 (2.64%)	0 (0.00%)	4 (0.39%)	34 (3.32%)	11 (1.08%)
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	I Do Not Know	Does Not Apply	Did not answer

d. Be more optimistic about my child's future.

678 (66.28%)	256 (25.02%)	24 (2.35%)	2 (0.20%)	11 (1.08%)	39 (3.81%)	13 (1.27%)
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	I Do Not Know	Does Not Apply	Did not answer

20. Over the past year, First Steps services have had a positive impact on my child's progress in the following areas:

a. Understanding and using language

544 (53.18%)	247 (24.14%)	30 (2.93%)	9 (0.88%)	18 (1.76%)	154 (15.05%)	21 (2.05%)
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	I Do Not Know	Does Not Apply	Did not answer

b. Learning and cognition

537 (52.49%)	287 (28.05%)	18 (1.76%)	2 (0.20%)	16 (1.56%)	135 (13.20%)	28 (2.74%)
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	I Do Not Know	Does Not Apply	Did not answer

c. Social skills/behavior

449 (43.89%)	279 (27.27%)	36 (3.52%)	2 (0.20%)	21 (2.05%)	208 (20.33%)	28 (2.74%)
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	I Do Not Know	Does Not Apply	Did not answer

d. Emotional

415 (40.57%)	243 (23.75%)	35 (3.42%)	3 (0.29%)	29 (2.83%)	260 (25.42%)	38 (3.71%)
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	I Do Not Know	Does Not Apply	Did not answer

e. Adaptive skills

474 (46.33%)	272 (26.59%)	23 (2.25%)	2 (0.20%)	24 (2.35%)	194 (18.96%)	34 (3.32%)
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	I Do Not Know	Does Not Apply	Did not answer

f. Physical/movement

584 (57.09%)	196 (19.16%)	25 (2.44%)	2 (0.20%)	9 (0.88%)	188 (18.38%)	19 (1.86%)
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	I Do Not Know	Does Not Apply	Did not answer

g. Health/medical

363 (35.48%)	233 (22.78%)	37 (3.62%)	4 (0.39%)	21 (2.05%)	336 (32.84%)	29 (2.83%)
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	I Do Not Know	Does Not Apply	Did not answer

21. Since being part of First Steps, I know how to work with professionals and advocate for what my child needs.

582 (56.89%)	341 (33.33%)	33 (3.23%)	5 (0.49%)	16 (1.56%)	33 (3.23%)	13 (1.27%)
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	I Do Not Know	Does Not Apply	Did not answer

22. The information and help my family receive through First Steps has made our family better off.

764 (74.68%)	205 (20.04%)	13 (1.27%)	6 (0.59%)	14 (1.37%)	9 (0.88%)	11 (1.08%)
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	I Do Not Know	Does Not Apply	Did not answer

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Note: Comments are typed as written on the surveys with the exception of the correction of most misspellings. Names and other personally identifiable information of children, families and providers have been redacted.

I am very happy with our developmental therapist as well as our nutritionist. I wish services would have been utilized earlier on when we were having such difficulty with her feedings. I preferred one service coordinator over another. I have had to wait on my therapists due to them being late for our appointments. All in all, I am happy with our care provided by First Steps. Thank you.

I feel First Steps is a wonderful program. We have two children who have received services and made great progress. However, I am concerned that our services have been limited during the past three months. We had requested a physical therapy evaluation and were denied the opportunity to have him evaluated. I was given the opportunity to speak to a First Steps physical therapist on a consultation basis. We were told our son was not showing delays that were severe enough (he can walk). Our daughter had these same delays, at this same age, three years ago. She qualified for physical therapy services and made progress. The attitude seems to be, "Wait and see when he is three years old." He is delayed in all motor skills and he will not catch up by himself by age three. The state will still have to pay for services in the Early Childhood setting and he is losing the opportunity to work on these skills at an earlier time in his life. Our insurance will not pay for therapy for developmental delays either.

I don't know what we would do without First Steps. It is such a blessing! The early intervention is making such a difference that our child may not need any extra help when he goes to school in the future. I have learned not to just take care of my child and show him love everyday, but to teach him with everyday situations.

First Steps therapists have really helped our son and this family. We are better able to help him by learning how to be better teachers ourselves.

First Steps has helped my child so much and he is starting to walk and enjoy everyday activities. Overall, First Steps is a great program and the therapists are like good friends to me. I don't know where my child would be without this program. Thanks.

We feel the First Steps program has really helped our son to improve in his motor and cognitive skills. Knowing that he has the help he needs to better himself makes us, as his parents, feel more at ease that we're not alone in helping him.

The people that we have worked with in First Steps are awesome. They continually check up on us to be sure things are going smoothly. Our therapists are compassionate women who obviously love their jobs.

IFSP meetings are very uncomfortable. You have too many people coming into your house and it's rather overwhelming.

This program has been essential to our family. There is so much shock and uncertainty in finding out we had a baby with special needs. It was very comforting to know that Missouri had such a wonderful program set up to help with his development. I appreciate and value the fact that the therapists come to our home and that convenience is great. I would hate to imagine special needs children's lives without First Steps. I hope that Matt Blunt thinks it through carefully.

Service coordinators never contact the family. Therapists are wonderful! Thank you First Steps.

Children's Mercy Hospital (KCMO) put us together with First Steps. First Steps was truly a blessing. Our child was diagnosed in early December of 2002. First Steps contacted and met with us to complete our intake process before Christmas. We had a service coordinator by the first week of January. Our child was evaluated and accepted in the infant program at the Children's Center for the Visually Impaired by February 1, 2003. The quick response of First Steps got our family on the right road to education, understanding, acceptance, and advocacy for our daughter. Our lives would be so different, for the worse, without the great service coordinator and the entire staff of the Children's Center for the Visually Impaired in Kansas City, Missouri.

Our son improved dramatically in a matter of a few weeks thanks to the direction I was given by First Steps! He continues to grow daily. Thank you so much!

First Steps is one of the best programs I have seen for developmentally-delayed children. To allow the children to have therapy in their home environment is so much better. Thank you.

I feel First Steps is essential for the growth and development of my baby. Without them, I feel my son could not have a normal life.

We feel our daughter has come a long way since she started with the First Steps program. Her therapists have been wonderful to work with as well as our service coordinator. They have always put her needs first and have been willing to listen to our concerns.

I believe the early intervention helped to educate us as parents and keep my child active and confident in her tasks. The earlier the intervention the better in the long run.

I greatly appreciate the help my daughter receives through First Steps. The therapists are great and really seem to be helping her. They are also good about letting me know what I can do at home with her as well. I am thankful for the First Steps program.

Love the program! I hope that it will not change much with Governor Blunt's changes as of July 1.

We are very happy with overall services and feel our therapists go above and beyond (very professional, personable, and knowledgeable). Without the help from First Steps, I do not know where we would be. We needed support and guidance and First Steps has always been there for us.

We feel very lucky to have access to the services provided by First Steps. Even in just two months, it's made a big difference. Thank you.

Thank you!

Our service coordinator is fantastic! She addresses all the needs of the family and support system!

Thanks First Steps for all you do.

My child was eligible because of her low birth weight. I haven't heard from anyone since the service coordinator and I went over the IFSP. I did, however, get some literature in March. Please keep in touch.

My service coordinator is very nice, but slow in returning calls, setting up IFSP meetings, and now, our transitional meeting.

The program is excellent and has served our family as a great reassurance in the normal development of our premature child. Please keep it going for those who need it!

First Steps is a very important part of my grandson's program. Without it in place, we just couldn't afford the services he needs. Please continue to fight for families with disabled children who are using and need the program for their children. Thanks and God bless you in your efforts and endeavors towards keeping this program alive so our children can continue to thrive and develop the skills they so desperately need to survive in today's modern world.

We have had the same physical therapist for over a year and we love her. She loves my son and does wonderful work with him. My son has a rare condition and not even the doctors know much about it. But she does different exercises with my son to work on strength and flexibility.

I cannot say enough about what a lifesaver First Steps has been for us. My son's speech was delayed, he is high energy, and has a high tolerance for pain. He was sensory hungry. The two combined could have been disastrous, but his huge improvements in speech and language gives him another way to communicate. The occupational therapist gave us clues on how to help our son. I do want to say that I was shocked that this was a free service. Sliding scale based on income and needs seems appropriate. Thank you.

I am very grateful for First Steps! It helped my family so much and now my son is doing great without help. Thank you.

Our service coordinator has been wonderful with the help that my child has needed from being evaluated, receiving services from people within the system, and helping us transition out of First Steps. I am extremely happy with the services that my son has received.

I really feel that First Steps in Missouri is a vital program for young children. I truly feel that without these services my child would not have made the progress that he has, being that therapy was started early and not delayed until public school. I feel that early intervention is the key and my son will not need as intensive therapy once he is in the school district. I truly feel blessed to live in a state like Missouri that cares for the welfare of the very young. Without First Steps, I know my life and my son's life would be different in that this program has opened doors and made my family better. Thank you.

I know that without First Steps, my child would not be doing all that she does; sit up, walk, sign language, swim, eat, and color, to name a few. Do not let this program every stop. What a help this has been to my family.

Both of my sons were "normal" developing babies and then, suddenly and unexpectedly, delayed. I want you all to know what a blessing the support system of our service coordinator and all of our therapists have been. They have been here for us in all developments and lack thereof. I am so grateful to have my boys cared for by these ladies and want to thank the state of Missouri for the funding! Without the First Steps program, we would not have the outlook, expertise and hope that we have.

I honestly do not know what we would have done without First Steps. We found out about our daughter's arm while she was still in the womb and so we had time to adjust to the idea. However, we had no idea how to handle the details. The services provided by First Steps are the sole reason our daughter is doing so well today. She is developmentally on track, even advanced in some areas, and is a bright, happy, well-adjusted child. We will miss all the help we received from First Steps, but will be forever grateful. Thank you.

I am so appreciative of the First Steps program. It has enabled my son to get the individualized help needed in speech therapy. His development in language skills has improved over a few months. I hope the services rendered by First Steps are not stopped due to lack of funding by the state of Missouri. Thank you

I feel, in my case, my service coordinator is a waste of the programs money. I have never received a monthly phone call to check up on my family even though medical surgery was coming up. Again, she has never called except at the six-month and one-year points.

This is a wonderful program. I don't know what we would do without it. It has been a tremendous help, even in just the past few months.

The coordinator was supposed to get back with me on setting up speech services for my child. I spoke with her in February and it is now May. I followed up with my in-home therapist and have not heard from them either. I really appreciate the First Steps program and love my worker. But, I would have liked a more timely response on the speech program. Thank you.

We strongly believe that without First Steps and the Special Learning Center, our child wouldn't have made the progress that she has to this day. We were referred to First Steps through a friend of ours because her child has the same problem that ours has and, without knowing about First Steps, we would not have known what to do. Without this program and the help it provides, there would be a lot of children out there with a lot of problems that couldn't easily be fixed without First Step's help. There are a lot of families that can't afford the kind of help/service that First Steps provides and, without your help, who knows where our children would be today with some of the problems that they have. If the state and the Governor turns down this program or starts making cuts, there are going to be a lot of children out there with special needs who won't receive the help that they need. We believe there would be a lot more high school dropouts. For example, a child is born with one limb that looks different than the other and they can't move it. Going through school, children can be very cruel by teasing or making fun of others. Without First Steps to help some of these children with their special needs, there could possibly be a lot more dropouts in school because they can't cope with being made fun of everyday. First Steps helps these children to be a lot more positive about themselves and to go forward in life. Later in life, there may be a lot more of our children unemployed because of some of the problems they have, if they didn't get the help they needed that First Steps provides. Needless to say, we are very happy with First Steps and the Special Learning Center and if there is anything we can do to help, we would be glad to. Fundraisers would help raise money for First Steps. We want to thank you very much for the help you have given our child.

I feel that since my son has been going to First Steps, he has made a big improvement and I am very pleased.

The First Steps program has been valuable to me as a foster parent and is even more important in the birth family.

This has been a wonderful program for my daughter who has Congenital Heart Defects and has had a small stroke. She has learned to use her right hand, arm, and foot with much better control. At first, we were happy to just have her crawl normally and she has been walking with ease. She has come a long way with the help of First Steps and the Special Learning Center. Our family could not have gotten this kind of caring and results from any other source. Please continue the First Steps program and do not take the hope away from the children and families who need it most.

We are so appreciative of all the services and help our son has received. It has totally changed his life for the better. Thank you.

Both of my children were born at 27 weeks and weighed two pounds. We are a middle class family with private insurance. Insurance does not cover all the therapy they need. Our sixteen month old son has Cerebral Palsy in his right side. We have used First Steps for both children. Our daughter, who is now six, did not need a lot of services. But our son needs these services to help him catch up developmentally. The care and services he receives from First Steps are necessary. We pay taxes, pay for private insurance, and work hard. My children were not born premature because I smoke, drink or do drugs. I had healthy pregnancies but just could not hold off labor. I see people having babies that are substance abusers, smoke, and don't care. They are on Welfare and Medicaid. We are raising generations in this state to live on Welfare and Medicaid. Why don't we concentrate on limiting women from having so many children to get more government money. We pay taxes and deserve services like First Steps. We want our children and support them but not with tax dollars. This is one service that we cannot afford and our insurance does not cover. Our children have seen amazing results from First Steps. I have also emailed all the senators and representatives I know about this. I have also emailed the Governor's office. Please let me know if I can be of further assistance.

I do not know what I would have done without nursing services. I was working full-time when the nurse came in. I had sleep deprivation and I needed help with the baby. The nurse was great.

Thanks. Now that our son is three years old, we will be leaving the program soon. But, the progress he has made through First Steps was amazing.

I haven't seen a specialist yet.

First Steps is an amazing program. The early intervention program will help my child walk and talk soon. All of the help we get is great. We cannot do without them.

Our therapists were wonderful and really influenced our lives and helped our daughter so much.

First Steps is a wonderful program! I was referred by Parents As Teachers when my child did not meet her developmental milestones as she should physically. As a new mom, I did not know what to do to help my daughter. First Steps set me up with a physical therapist who came to my home and helped my daughter and taught me what to do to help her as well. Now, at 19 months, my daughter is completely caught up. Without First Steps early intervention, my daughter probably would not have walked on time and would have been several months delayed. What a great program. Catching problems early is important to every child's development as they can overcome them much easier when they're young. Thank you First Steps!

Even though one child has tested out of First Steps, his brother and sister (triplets) are always asked to join in the learning and fun. I am thankful that their providers treat all of them the same. They are all doing a lot better because of First Steps.

Our daughter is now a thriving two-year-old thanks to the First Steps services. She's now a First Steps "graduate." Thank you.

Without the service coordinator through First Steps, we believe that our child would not have the opportunity to develop normally. With these services our family has also been better equipped to deal with the special needs of our child.

I am very pleased with all the services through First Steps. I am also very pleased with all the therapists that see my daughter. They are all very nice and understanding to my family's needs. The therapists do a great job! I am very lucky to have the services for my daughter. They help a lot. Thank you.

Our service provider has been wonderful with our twins. We hope that the First Steps program continues. They have been wonderful for us.

Our family believes First Steps has been an essential part of our child's development. He currently receives speech/language. However, our oldest son received, and needed, every service. We have very strong feelings about the importance of this program.

The First Steps program is absolutely the best. It has been nothing less than a miracle for what they have done for our family and our son. I only wish they got all the funding they deserve and additional therapists to meet the needs in our area. (Speech therapy)

Early intervention is important and I support the First Steps program. Not only is it better for the child, but much more cost effective in the long run.

Our therapist was great!

First Steps has helped me understand so much about my child with special needs. I never expected to have a child with special needs and never knew of First Steps until my child was born. Now, I am so grateful to First Steps and my child's therapist. My child, in the third month, with First Steps help, is doing great and is so strong. I have learned how to help my child and I'm looking forward to the future. My child can only get stronger and better from this point. First Steps is a wonderful program and I would be lost without it. I wouldn't know what to do if it wasn't available.

Great program Matt Blunt! Don't leave families out in the dark. Thanks First Steps!

Our son and the entire family have benefited so much from the therapy that he has received. The therapist helps us so much just by helping us communicate with our son. Now we know what he needs and can give it to him. She (the therapist) is a part of our routine.

I just wanted to state that we have been very impressed and pleased with each one of the speech therapists and service coordinators that our family has worked with. Our son was also part of First Steps for a Cleft Palate and so we have had several therapists and a few service coordinators. Without fail, they have been professional, dedicated, and caring individuals who have been a joy to work with. Our family is grateful for the services First Steps provides us and consider the program to be a blessing.

Our twins have significant language delays at 28 months old and they still don't use words to communicate. After four months in the program, we are disappointed by the lack of progress, so we're pursuing another language/speech pathologist. Our current therapist is very inflexible in scheduling. Monday's at 8:45 a.m. is the only time she can now see us. Initially, she had offered several time options. More importantly, is the lack of results and communication with us. You could eliminate the service coordinator for families like ours because we've seen her one time and never heard from her again. I called her once (upon hearing the media news on possibly losing First Steps), otherwise, I don't know what her role is or why she's being paid (shuffle paperwork?). I think First Steps is a valuable program for families in need, despite our lack of speech progress. The initial contact person reacted quickly. We will try another therapist who doesn't just show up when it suits her best with the same bucket of toys and no teaching/learning plans. My hunch is that there are numerous administrative cuts you could make (computers, etc. versus paperwork) to streamline this program. After all, what exactly do service coordinators do? I feel our speech therapist shows up and continues to "approve" families just for the steady billing. Perhaps they should be accountable for receiving that paycheck! Provide me with a copy of what I sign each month. I have requested this four times and have never received (April-July). Provide a written lesson/treatment plan. Families who utilize more than one service could perhaps pay a small co pay? There are lots of options for keeping this program but on a smaller budget. Start internally! Thank you for asking for our opinion. P.S. Our speech therapist receives \$50.00 (\$25 X 2) per visit, but only focuses on one child at a time, while the other is left unattended. She should only get paid for one child as that is all she is working with.

The workers that come to my house have a good understanding of the way my son acts. If he is in a bad mood when they arrive, they try to work with him and get him out of the bad mood so they can do their job. My son has made huge improvements since they started.

Having a daughter with Down's Syndrome, I am constantly amazed at how "typical" she is thanks to the hard work of my First Steps team.

When we had our son, we were clueless on the special needs he would have. Service providers stepped in and provided guidance and options. I am so thankful for their help. The single most stand-out service to our family is the way First Steps led us to help at a time when we didn't know up from down. Governor Matt Blunt needs to remember that students come in all shapes and sizes.

We love our speech pathologist. She has developed a positive relationship with our son. She has been patient with him even when he made things tough on her. We will miss her when he turns three and we will have to start working with the school district.

I really wasn't sure about the need for service coordinators. I felt that once we were in the program, I could handle the meetings and progress through the process. Our service coordinator was very nice and checked on us regularly. I just didn't feel like she was necessary in the scheme of things.

I believe First Steps has been tremendous in helping my daughter dramatically improve her speech. I know of another family who has had the same results. I believe it's a valuable service and I am happy to have been a part of it's benefits.

The First Steps program has been a godsend to us. We have learned a lot from them. They are wonderful people to work with the disabled kids the way they do. Thank you.

We have had terrible service coordinators. We are on our fourth coordinator and I have never requested a change. It took months to get speech therapy started after I had to throw a fit to get it started. Our service coordinator (who has no medical background) didn't believe it was necessary. First Steps needs a major overhaul. I think service coordinators are milking the system.

I feel our caseworker and speech therapist are wonderful people. They are so nice and have nothing but the child's best interest at heart. But, I see no improvement in our child. There is just something there that nobody can figure out. I attribute all this to my being a failure as a father and not to First Steps. First Steps is a great program. I am glad the funding came through and I wish everyone the best.

First Steps has been a blessing for us. Our son has Conductive Hearing Loss in one ear and normal hearing in the other ear. The speech therapy that he is receiving weekly has helped reduce his temper tantrums and has given us hope that he will be fine. Thank you so much for providing these services. It really does make a difference. Thank you.

First Steps has had a positive impact on my son's life. I don't know what we would have done without the early intervention.

Being in Perry county limits the availability of services. Also, I feel it to be beneficial if the new parents had a workshop about how to get the best IFSP for their child. Also, that would be a great place to meet other parents who share the same concerns.

First Steps has been a great and rewarding experience for our daughter. Her self-esteem has improved. Without First Steps and early intervention she would not feel as confident and would not be where she is today. I am truly disappointed to learn that there are cut backs and other children, like our daughter, will not receive the much needed help.

This is our third child in the First Steps program. Our daughter, the first one in the program, will be starting kindergarten this fall. She does not need any more services. Because of First Steps, she is a typical kid starting school. She will not be teased or ridiculed by her peers. She also won't be pulled out of class for services, so she won't "miss" anything. The kids will never know she had special needs. That means a lot for a child to be "normal." Where would these kids be without this wonderful resource? I believe early intervention is the key! I've seen it work!

My son has made great progress through the First Steps program. He sees a speech, occupational, and developmental therapist. I believe he's made his greatest progress through his occupational therapist. She takes the time to gather information throughout the week and the weekend to help me with some of son's issues. She gives me titles of books that she's read, or other parents have read. If she does not know, she always tries to find out.

We often wonder what we would have done without this program! We feel confident that we've done everything possible to help our daughter because of First Steps.

My daughter has developmental delays in all areas. She is 21 months old and has just learned to roll over. There is no diagnosis for her condition and we have no idea what the future will hold. Without First Steps, I am not sure where we would be. This is our first child so we were completely unaware of the natural progression of movement. Without the physical and occupational therapists we would never have been able to even teach her how to move her body in the slightest way. She currently receives physical, occupational, developmental, and speech therapy and has made such improvements! Besides the support the therapists have provided her, they have been an unbelievable emotional support for me. Our daughter has been through so much testing. Some of the tests were for horrible diseases and, without the emotional support of her therapists, I am sure I could not have handled it all. She also needed a special "stander" to help her bear weight on her legs. These are very expensive and our therapists researched to find her one that had already been used so First Steps would not have to pay for a new one, but only for adjustments to the used one. Our daughter has since outgrown it and fortunately can bear weight on her own and we have returned it back into the system for use by another First Steps child. In closing, I hope I can provide you with anything you need to continue the program. We would have been lost without it. It has empowered me and, most importantly, given me hope. We are so grateful.

First Steps has been an important part of our child's language, speech, and social development and assessment. I was so impressed with First Steps that I have gone through training to become a provider.

A truly beneficial program! I still can't believe what Governor Blunt wanted to do, and still wants to do, with the program. Parents feel lost and overwhelmed when they are faced with a lifetime with a special needs child. First Steps helps so much by helping us to get through those first crucial years while helping the child learn and develop as much as they can to become more like a "typical" child, if possible. Also, I truly believe this program saves the state millions of dollars and time when the child enters the school system. Thank you.

Without First Steps, our family would have been lost. Our providers are wonderful and caring. We have learned so much over these past few months.

I could not be more pleased with the results our son has had while in First Steps. He is now able to communicate with us. He understands us when we talk to him. His face lights up when he learns how to make more sounds. I feel that without First Steps, our son would be trapped in a world without language. I don't know if he would have ever been able to communicate with us without their help. My family feels so strongly in favor of First Steps that it will be our only factor when considering and identifying political candidates to support. If a candidate doesn't support fully funding First Steps, we won't support them.

We don't have any negative remarks about the program at all! We've had a wonderful experience in the last six months. Our coordinator was thorough, flexible, and clearly outlined the goals of First Steps and followed through with those goals. Our speech therapist has brought our child from two words spoken to over fifty in only five months. We've been taught so many useful techniques, and each week brings an exciting new challenge. Before joining the program, we honestly were a little skeptical. Our only regret is not joining sooner! We're very thankful for the First Steps program. Keep up the great work!

The First Steps program has been a tremendous resource and help to my family and participating child. I can't imagine where we'd be without it! We feel the services are appropriate and necessary to allow our daughter to participate in public schools when she is older and to be a more productive member of society.

Awesome program! Please do not cut this valuable aid to children and families.

Without First Steps, we would not have been able to provide our child with the help and assistive technology he needs in order to learn and develop at a "normal" rate and catch up to his peers by school age. First Steps has allowed us to give our child a better start in life than we would have been able to without it. Thank you First Steps!

I feel First Steps should follow children through ages of five and six for general classrooms and then incorporate special school district! Parents shouldn't have to work so hard to get the services they feel their children need.

Navigating the "matrix" has been extremely frustrating. We have not been pleased with our child's speech pathologist. We checked, or had our service coordinator check, with five different speech pathologists that indicated that they had availability on the "matrix," but, as it turned out, none of them were available. We have been unable to find a new speech pathologist to meet our needs.

I am very grateful to First Steps. Without this program my son would be seriously developmentally delayed.

First Steps is a wonderful program. We are grateful the state provides such an organized, professional program to assist our family through this "confusing" time. Thank you.

I want to thank everyone involved in helping our family adjust to having a baby with a lot of special needs. Our family could never have adjusted as well as we have without all of you. Thanks.

First Steps has made a world of difference for my son and my family. Thank you.

Having the First Steps program was extremely beneficial to our son's early progress. Without it he wouldn't be doing as well as he is today. At two and half years old, he participates fully in a preschool program with typically developed children. Without First Steps (our insurance not paying for services) we would not have been able to afford most early intervention services.

Q4: Through Parents As Teachers; Q14: Yes! Q18: More than that, they have gotten him on track to normal development and taught me how to help him stay there. Comments: We would not have known about First Steps without Parents As Teachers. First Steps is the best program our state offers. It has helped our family so much and made us glad over and over that our children are growing up in Missouri. First Steps and Parents as Teachers work hand-in-hand to give Missouri children the best start possible. Our taxes are well spent on these programs.

My child's therapists were wonderful! As they left for other jobs, they were not replaced. My child went without services (especially speech) for a long time.

First Steps is an awesome program! In talking with my peers at work, I found out that someone had a child that was developmentally delayed and I told them about First Steps. They now receive services! It makes me feel good that there is such a helpful program for our kids!

The occupational and speech therapists have been wonderful. We had little or no contact with the first service coordinator, but the new one has been more efficient.

We have a great service coordinator. She has kept us up to date and explains everything. We are also very pleased with his speech therapist. First Steps is a great and important program. Please keep it funded.

Without the First Steps program, our family would not have the necessary tools for our child to develop as normally as she has. From the equipment to the audiology testing and one-on-one teaching, my wife and I feel far more comfortable aiding our child in her development and advocating for her needs, as we move and she grows.

We are extremely unhappy with the amount of speech therapists available for a working family. Please consider adding more to the list and have them available nights and weekends. It took us four months to get our child signed up because of their lack of availability!

My daughter is a totally different child. Before First Step's speech therapy, our child couldn't communicate with us. It has been very frustrating for all of us and really hindered her development. She now repeats words, knows her colors, shapes, counts to 12, smiles, and laughs.

My service coordinator was/is so great. My son's speech teacher was, and is, also great. First Steps is a great program that has helped my son so very much! Thank you.

I don't like how First Steps lumps all kids together no matter how mild or severe. My son has speech problems but I don't think he should be listed as a child that has "special needs." This may bother him later in life, being categorized this way. Yes, it bothers me too. It's hard enough needing speech therapy, but now he has this "special ed" title to carry through life. First Steps needs more categories or different ways of labeling children. It took four months to finally get a speech therapist out here. That was four months too long. There is too much paperwork and precious time is lost. Thanks.

This program is the best thing that has ever happened to us. Without it, my children wouldn't have received the therapy they needed. Thank you.

My son just completed the First Steps program. He was receiving speech and language therapy. He had a significant speech delay and by the time we finished First Steps, his speech was at a normal level. He did not qualify for SSD services and we are thrilled. The program did so much to educate us in the area of advocating for our son and provided invaluable information to us regarding this condition. Our coordinator and speech therapist were wonderful and went well beyond what I expected from them to provide us information. I cannot imagine how our son would be doing if we had not been involved in the First Steps program.

We think First Steps is a FANTASTIC program which has helped my whole family understand and deal with our child's special needs. We thank everyone at First Steps for all their hard work and support.

Although we rarely require the services of our service coordinator, she seems easily accessible and available to us. The therapy our son has received through First Steps has allowed him to become much more age-appropriate in self-help skills and the speech therapist made it easier for him to interact with his peers at home.

It is the best program. My daughter started receiving services the week she came home from the NICU. Missouri needs to keep the First Steps program the way it is.

We rely on the First Steps program to keep our daughter on track in her progress. The therapists come up with ideas to ensure our daughter's physical progress. We appreciate having access to this service which doesn't have to be processed through our health insurance. Our insurance has covered many other costs related to our daughter's genetic condition.

The timely manner of the early intervention services was key to our daughter's development. Our service coordinator was outstanding.

We have a wonderful coordinator. She is very dedicated, caring, and always there to help us with advice and services. Our family is very grateful to her for that. We hope that every service coordinator is like her.

This is a wonderful program that has offered and given my child the help and resources we could not have given him. The information, techniques, equipment, and knowledge are priceless to a family with a special needs child, not to mention that the burden of financial obligation is taken away. I hope other families can and will be able to look to First Steps for the health and development of their special needs child.

I'm grateful that my son has been able to have his speech therapist come two times a week. He has Apraxia and is really benefiting from the therapy. I don't think he'd be where he is now if he had therapy only once a week. I hope other families can have therapy two times a week too. I love the program.

Getting someone to come evaluate my daughter was difficult. The questions asked over the phone did not represent her needs well and since we did not yet have a diagnosis, she was disqualified. This was frustrating because of the time that passed without services that could have been helpful.

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With regards to if more therapy is warranted, I feel like our service coordinator did not listen to my early intervention staff's recommendations or my husband and me. All parties felt that more therapy time was warranted and would be beneficial based on past progress and it was not allowed. I realize as with any government program, there are limitations to what can be done. Our family feels that if there could be a way to find and eliminate "abusers" of the program, (i.e., people who are strictly using therapy time to address their children's concerns as opposed to doing the "homework" and carrying over techniques taught into every day life), then it wouldn't be as difficult to get approval for increased frequency in a case like ours. I understand how difficult this would be and costly for any start-up fees, but invaluable and cost-effective in the long run. Best of luck! That's why we leave it to the pros.

P.S. It should be said that in no way do we blame our service coordinator because she is only doing her job.

I am a retired ECSE teacher. I was well aware of First Steps. When we adopted our daughter in September of 2003, I knew she would need First Steps. She has done fantastic in the areas we identified as needing help. We are so pleased with this program. It's too bad that Governor Blunt doesn't recognize how valuable this program is.

In response to question nine, my son was eligible for speech/language and occupational therapy. In the original meeting he was assigned a language therapist that he sees twice weekly and an occupational therapist who quit one day prior to starting his visits. I was told in January of 2005 that my coordinator was working on finding him another occupational therapist. It is now May 2005 and I still have no occupational therapist for my son which even my language therapist definitely recommends. Also, no meeting for the transition of SSD has been arranged for the upcoming fall 2005 school year. I was regularly told we would begin having my son tested and would schedule a meeting with SSD back in April, but I haven't heard anything about it as yet.

Please keep the program going. I have had two children benefit from First Steps. My four-year-old daughter is walking today because of the program and will attend a "normal" preschool next year with therapy services provided through the public school. My son's language and speech have also improved because of the program. There is no way we could afford to pay for the therapy services if the program wasn't available.

Without the early detection and therapy provided through this program, my children (twins) would not be the interactive, playful, and happy children I have today. Words cannot express the gratitude we have for the team effort it has taken to prepare the boys for this fall. With First Steps, we can transition the boys in August to the school district and have realistic hopes that their progress will continue and they will be ready in two years to attend kindergarten. We have much to be thankful for including how fortunate we were to know about First Steps and to have been able to secure all the services needed. Thank you.

Without the First Steps program my child would not be saying any words. They have surrounded my child with much needed therapy that has helped her develop more than I could have ever imagined. It is a wonderful program and I will miss my therapists and service coordinator when my child transitions into the special school district.

Early intervention for our son's speech and language deficits have made all the difference in the world. We have wonderful providers and are thrilled that there is a program like this available and that the Governor is not eliminating such a valuable resource to our children.

Before having my children, I was an ECSE teacher. As a result, I knew a lot about First Steps, the processes involved, and my rights. This greatly aided me in receiving services in a timely manner. Were it not for that, the intake process would have been painfully slow. Once the intake process was complete, the service coordinator and the service providers (occupational and physical) were phenomenal and have continued to provide excellent care for my child.

We have been provided the least restrictive environment for care and development for our daughter who was born nine weeks premature (31 weeks gestation) and had an 86 day stay in the NICU. She has a reversible birth defect with surgery. While we are waiting for this, First Steps has literally helped our baby take her first steps and learn confidence despite her physical limitations. Thank you!

First Steps has been wonderful! My husband and I are very grateful for the help our son has been receiving! Thank you.

Our physical therapist does a tremendous job! She gets our son to do things that we cannot. She is always good to give us things to work on with our son and has even left some of her personal toys/equipment for us to work with. Thank you for this great program.

I learned about First Steps from numerous sources. My daughter's medical condition was diagnosed in-utero and her eligibility was quite obvious right away. The difficult part was her initial evaluation for eligibility. Our service coordinator was difficult to communicate with. She seemed too busy to get my daughter's evaluation completed so therapy could start. She was slow to return phone calls (repeatedly). I had to go above her authority to get her to move things along. I've come in contact with other First Steps families that had frustrating experiences with getting the eligibility evaluation done. THIS STEP NEEDS TO BE TAKEN BY A QUALIFIED THERAPIST WHO IS CAPABLE OF RECOGNIZING A CHILD'S ISSUES AND WHO IS AS EAGER TO RECEIVE THEM. I would not be able to care for my daughter in the ways she needs to be taken care of without the help of her physical, occupational, developmental, speech therapists, and our service coordinator, who helps pull it all together. My daughter with handicaps is our fifth child. Her situation is far from a normal/average child her age. We'd be lost without the guidance, instruction, and understandable explanations given to us by our therapists. One of the biggest concerns I have with the First Steps Program is that when the "recent changes" in the system are implemented, the quality of the therapists providing help for our First Steps kids will be compromised by choosing the therapists with the lowest "price tag." As a taxpayer, I'd rather my money go to the better educated/experienced person that might not be as effective. It may end up costing taxpayers more when the child hits pre-school and needs extra daily assistance and attention. Be sure to listen not only to the First Steps families, but the therapists, educators, service coordinators, EVERYONE involved in helping the kids in need of this program. Thanks!

We are very grateful for the services First Steps has provided our daughter and our family. We know that she would not be where she is today developmentally, if she had not been given therapy and we wouldn't be as optimistic about her future.

Our child has made a complete turn around. First Steps has been an absolute godsend. I don't know where we would be without these critical services. Thank you so much!

Please pay postage on government mail; especially on a voluntary survey. Thank you.

First Steps does a great job. For them to be fully successful and for the child to achieve the most, the parents need to work with the child daily or as close to it as possible.

Every person we have encountered through First Steps has been wonderful. The coordinators, therapists, and everyone else are so nice, respectful, and knowledgeable. We are thrilled that our child can be a part of this program. Thank you!

Excellent program, but too many meetings.

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The First Steps program has been a godsend! When we first learned our baby had Down's Syndrome (7th month of pregnancy), we were devastated. After the birth of our twins, we were very thankful there was such a great program as First Steps and we don't know what we would do without it. The physical therapist that comes to our house every other week to work with our son is awesome. She is totally in tune with my child's needs, goals, and progress and has given us, as parents, more confidence and optimism for our son's future. First Steps is a wonderful program and we hope it is always available for us and for future parents.

I cannot say enough about First Steps. My child has improved 100% since she began meeting with her speech therapist. Thank you so much for helping her. I cannot believe how far she has come.

It is a wonderful program that gives children the opportunity to reach their potential. Our lives would be a living hell if we had not been given the gift of First Steps.

Question sixteen is offensive. Our child was born prematurely and we have used First Steps primarily as a monitoring tool.

First Steps has been vital in helping my family adjust to my daughter's disability. We don't feel powerless.

I have a great team to work with. They take the time to explain to me until I understand. They work with me with appointments. They make things very convenient and easy.

Speech services were difficult to find. My child went without services for almost 12 weeks (after our first speech pathologist left on maternity leave).

Thank you for all the services First Steps has provided us. Our former service coordinator and current service coordinator have been extremely helpful, diligent, and efficient. I wish the providers could get paid in a more timely manner. Many of our ABA therapists (who are still students) have almost had to leave First Steps to get other jobs that do not make them wait three months to get paid. Thank you again for giving my daughter a chance to lead a normal life.

I am very concerned about the increased fees the state is planning to assess to families. I had to learn my job to care for my child, and so, an additional \$100 per month will be quite a lot for our family.

I did not like losing my original service coordinator (she was an independent one). My new service coordinator does not call me, does not check in, and in general, is very slow about making even the simplest change. She has been rather difficult to work with for both me and my daughter's therapists.

We are very thankful for First Steps. I am not sure where our child would be developmentally without it. I just wish we would have known about it when he was first born. The first three months were very hard.

I would do whatever possible to advocate for the First Steps program to stay in effect. Although my child doesn't need continued services, his initial evaluations were important and monitoring his progress gives me peace of mind. I know many families whose children need the program. It is wonderful! Early intervention is crucial!

Once we found out about First Steps (word-of-mouth), it has made such a difference in my son's life. We were brought into the program promptly after only one inquiry. Our service coordinator has been extremely helpful and our services from Central Institute for the Deaf has been absolutely incredible and excellent beyond our expectations! Without First Steps, there would be a lot more anxiety about our son's condition. I believe his quality of life and his prospects for the future would have been much lower without you.

My child was born at 31 weeks gestation and has Down's Syndrome. If not for the help we received, I would not have recognized many of her delays.

Parents often hear rumors/gossip. When we, as parents, hear about some less than ethical providers of services within First Steps, it's nauseating. These are our children we are talking about. We don't like to hear that some service providers are bilking the system and benefiting monetarily from our child's delays. Fortunately, we had wonderful therapists. Unfortunately, there's some bad seed. That needs to be addressed. Who is running this program? Is that person ethical?

I think First Steps is wonderful. My family could not afford the services my child needs for his developmental delay. Your service is greatly appreciated and has improved my child's life. Thank you!

Both our physical and occupational therapists have been wonderfully supportive through a challenging time. Their expertise has allowed them to pick up on our son's developmental issues before I realized them. I'm sure that my child's challenges would be far worse without their assistance. As he has made improvements, they have both initiated a reduction in visits which reflects their personal integrity and financial responsibility.

Although we had a very lengthy process to get into the System Point of Entry, we have really felt blessed to be able to work with such highly capable and knowledgeable professionals. Our service coordinator, speech pathologist, and occupational therapist are so dedicated to seeing our son become more successful in his ability to communicate at the age appropriate level that he has slowly been approaching. Thank you so much for allowing us to benefit by utilizing this program.

We live in a rural area where there are not many First Steps providers. With a large family, it has made it inconvenient for me to provide transportation so my child can receive help. We are not receiving the amount of services we should be. This will be especially true for the next year or more. I think there would be more interest in your program if they would get paid more. Our service coordinator is doing her best to recruit so that we can get the services that we need. We appreciate this very much.

It would be a huge detriment to my child and other's like her if First Steps ends.

We have been in a program like this one in Ohio. Our son started that program when he was six-months-old and we have been involved ever since. They were the ones that helped me get into this program. The service coordinator in Ohio was much more involved. I saw her at least once a month in my home. She would come to see if I needed anything for our son. She helped with purchasing a high chair for him and gave us diapers. Also, at Christmas, she gave us a gift certificate to Wal-Mart. This was part of their program. It was nice to have help with these things. She was going to help with getting my son a bed too, but we moved to Missouri. Due to my son's health problems, I have learned with doctors and other health professionals how to teach my son. I truly believe he wouldn't be as advanced as he is now if it wasn't for these types of programs. He has a speech disorder and with the help we get at home, we have found other ways to talk with him and we are starting to understand some of his words.

It was a bit difficult learning about First Steps. But, once we were approved, amazing things started to happen. Our service coordinator has done everything I've requested in a very timely and caring manner. Our son's speech and occupational therapists have made a huge impact on our lives and have taught me ways to help my son. that I would have never had access to or even thought of if I were facing these challenges alone.

Hopefully, First Steps can continue to provide services for other such children for a long time to come. Thank you very much.

First Steps is not listed in the phone book. I had a very hard time finding you! We came from another state and your First Steps is totally different. I feel that your staff is only looking for money and not my child's welfare. The occupational therapist would only come if my insurance would pay for it. So, because of that, I chose to just have speech, developmental and physical therapy. The physical therapist is only working with my child for a few months because we will be going back to our home state soon. I am very pleased with our speech and developmental therapists.

I am a teacher with a Masters in Curriculum and Instruction with an emphasis in Early Childhood. This is an area I am familiar with and I have been so pleased with our occupational, physical, and speech therapists. I appreciate their relationship with us and our daughter. They show concern, love, and are professionals. I have no idea how I could have found this quality of people on my own. We have our daughter double-insured plus I went to a job share position where my hours and pay were cut in half so I could be with my daughter for therapy. Even though we are financially secure, having a daughter with a disability is a huge financial burden. We so appreciate the services we receive at no cost. When you have a child born with a disability, your world gets turned upside down. At first, so much information is being given to you (many doctor visits and lots of learning about your child's situation) that to be given the "gift" of First Steps was such a blessing! I only hope Missouri families in the future can be given the chance of such an awesome start for their child's future as we have through First Steps.

Thank God for First Steps. People who have children with special needs need people like that. They help so much.

I believe that the First Steps program is a huge asset to my family and my son. Without the program and the services that he receives he would not be prepared for the world ahead of him. It would be a tragedy to prevent or take away the life that he could lead by having early intervention. Studies show that intervention prior to age three prepares the child more for life and aids vocabulary growth. Do not take this away. Thank you.

My husband and I are very blessed. Our son has shown no signs of trouble with development in any area (18 months). We have stayed in the First Steps program so that we can receive help if those problems should occur.

Without this early intervention our child would not be doing as well as she is. Also, with First Steps help, being able to place her in a preschool program at age two has made a huge impact. I hate that this part is being cut. Kids learn from each other. They get that social part that you can't always give them at home. I have been very pleased with First Steps and would gladly share more information and thoughts with you in the future.

In general, First Steps is a good program. I hope it continues to receive funding so this program can help others. It is a worthwhile program overall.

First Steps is a wonderful program for helping children get off to a great start. I'm glad we are a part of it.

First Steps has shown me how to do therapy on my child and work with him, teaching him to do certain things.

The current First Steps staff goes over and beyond the call of duty and I appreciate everything each person does for me and my child.

First Steps is very difficult to get a hold of. No one knows how.

Our service coordinator does not contact me to check on my child's improvement. To me, if you are going to be the main person in charge of the group that works with my child, you need to know what's going on with her. I feel that we could cut back on the money spent on First Steps if we paid people for the amount of work done and not the number of families they service.

The ONLY reason that I circled "Disagree," was because it took forever for us to find the First Steps program, but once we contacted them, eventually, everything went along smoothly. My husband and I are very stanch voting republicans. We believe firmly in First Steps because we have seen first hand it's effectiveness in our son. We were receiving physical therapy for him prior to First Steps and, although our therapist was very good, the therapy itself was less effective and seemed much more expensive. We are very pleased with First Steps because it enables us to better care for our son.

The Missouri First Steps program has made a remarkable difference in my son and the families well-being and development. We rarely contact our service coordinator because all of our services run smoothly. The service providers (physical, occupational, speech and developmental) are knowledgeable and more than willing to educate my family on ways to help improve my son's development. While my son is developmentally delayed, he would not be where he is now without the First Steps program.

Intake process was poor. Very unresponsive and disorganized. The quality of some therapists were poor.

Overall, First Steps and its providers have been a wonderful program. The reason for Question 9 being rated poorly is due to the fact that my son was supposed to receive speech therapy in the IFSP. For a few months, we had a speech therapist coming to our home. We decided to let her go for multiple reasons. She slapped my son's hand while I was in the process of trying to redirect him which was the biggest issue for letting her go. She would only model language and when I asked her for other suggestions, she was not able to provide anything else. After she was let go, there was only one more provider to choose from. This particular provider only worked with our son four to five times before quitting the First Steps program. We really enjoyed her and she did a lot of different things with our son besides modeling language. From our understanding, the reason she had to quit was for medical reasons (car accident), for which we do understand. However, since August 2004, our son has been without any speech therapy because there were not more providers to choose from, except going back to the original speech therapist we had, and that was not an option for us. My son receives services from occupational, physical, and developmental therapists. Our son enjoys these therapists and looks forward to them coming to work with him. These therapists have been extremely flexible by taking our schedule into consideration. If it wasn't for these therapists, I am not sure where our son's development would be today. The therapists have been knowledgeable in each of their fields. All of them have made it easier for us to be able to deal with our son's disability.

This program has helped us so very much. If it wasn't for this program being provided at no cost, my son would not be receiving the therapy he needs to hopefully have a normal life. If they begin to change, we will have to discontinue his therapy!

With the cuts made by Matt Blunt, we worry which therapists will be covered by our insurance. Paying for therapists not covered by First Steps will put a financial burden on our family. All the help my son receives is necessary.

First Steps has really helped my child. Due to ventilator dependency, we needed help that would come to our child. The coordinator and the therapists have been wonderful. They are knowledgeable, professional, caring and dependable. My child has improved tremendously and I feel First Steps played a major role.

Our family feels very lucky to have had the First Steps program available to our daughter. After months of hospitalization, we brought our daughter home on oxygen and with a feeding tube. To be honest, we were afraid to do much more than hold her at first. Our therapists helped us to get comfortable with her so that we could eventually get to work on her skills. Although they didn't always have all the answers, they usually could offer up some advice based on their experience working with other First Steps children. I worked as a Human Resource Manager at a Kansas City hospital for nine years and have had the opportunity to interview and hire quite a few occupational and physical therapists during that time. I have been impressed with the quality of health care professionals we have encountered in this program. It is easy to see that they truly care about the children they are working with. They have incorporated our whole family into the therapy process and dealt patiently with our five-year-old, who wants to be part of the action. Although the outcome of our daughter's future remains unclear, she has made significant strides in her development while in the First Steps program. I can't imagine what our family would have done without First Steps.

My family and my son have come a long way with this service. I don't know how we would have made it. Our service providers both deserve a very big pat on the back. They are two wonderful people. My son has come a long way and we feel he is so much better. After every session of speech therapy, I think he has learned something new. I pray everyday that they don't eliminate this service. What a sad thing it would be to take away from our children who need the help the most.

First Steps has been a blessing to us. Our little girl wouldn't have been able to walk without First Steps coming in and working with her. They have helped so much in many ways. Thank you First Steps.

First Steps has been a blessing to my family. In a time full of uncertainty they have calmed my family's fears, helped us to adapt to having a special needs child, and gave us the tools to help my daughter. Without them, who knows where we would be. My daughter has come such a long way. God bless First Steps.

I am glad there is a First Steps for my child. I just hope they will help our little girl. She has so many problems and has been through a lot. We just want to get her the help she needs. God bless you!

I didn't know the First Steps program even existed until my daughter was diagnosed with a rare muscular disorder. It has been very helpful as she has speech and occupational therapists that come to our home. There is not a physical therapist available in our area. I think it would be helpful if therapist evaluations were sent to parents and the doctor so they could review the progress with each other. My daughter has physical therapy through the hospital and I know that they always fax her progress reports to the doctor's office. However, the doctor doesn't receive reports from the First Steps program.

It appears that this survey was written in such a way that someone would have to be very unhappy with the First Steps program to be negative about it. I am thankful for First Steps and for the professional help we have received through the program. But, I am not convinced the program is run as well as it could be. I particularly feel there is more paperwork and bureaucracy than necessary. It is hard for me to honestly evaluate the program because I don't know if there are any options to receive help for my child who has Down's Syndrome. She is actually extremely healthy and as unaffected by Down's Syndrome as a child could be, I suppose. Therefore, it is hard for me to understand the NEED for all the paperwork and meetings authorized on her behalf. Don't get me wrong, I believe we should help children with disabilities as early as possible. But, I think we should do it in as efficient and simple a manner as possible. In addition, I don't think it would hurt to have some sort of co pay for services. Perhaps there is for some, depending on family income? I think it helps us to realize that this is a service that has value if we have to pay something for it. Of course, that might mean for some that they wouldn't be able to take advantage of needed services, but then that could be an area that the coordinator could step in and determine need and take care of it. I realize it is a complex issue and, in the process of evaluation, many factors need to be taken into consideration. God bless you as you seek to meet the needs of these children in a responsible way!

I hope that this program will be able to continue. It has been very helpful, in a short time, with my son's development.

I wanted to switch service coordinators and the person I talked to actually called my service coordinator and told her I was complaining about her! So then I felt totally stupid when she called and asked what my problem was with her. I thought it was handled totally unprofessionally.

This is an invaluable program. The services my child receives has made a huge and positive impact on my child and the family. I am very grateful for this program and to be a part of it.

Our son has only been in First Steps for five months. But, you can definitely see a difference with the help of his therapists! Thank you so much.

Our First Steps coordinator has been exceptional in her role as our son's advocate. We have been very pleased with the professional and efficient manner that our son's needs have been addressed the past year and a half. We are truly grateful for the assistance that our family has received from First Steps.

My family is very pleased with our experience in the First Steps program. Our developmentally disabled child is now surpassing all expectations. His speech and physical levels are now age appropriate for normal children. Thank you.

I do not hear from my service coordinator hardly at all. All the services that could be offered to my child haven't been followed through with by the coordinator or the professionals. One therapist I had wasn't considerate of our needs, as time allowed.

I understand that the sessions need to be one hour long, but I would like to see some shorter session options (30 minutes/twice weekly). I have a two-year-old whose attention span is only about 30 minutes long.

This is a very good program. My son is moving forward in his speech problem. Without this program, I think we would have a hard time trying to get him to talk.

Our family hasn't benefited from the First Steps program at all. We have been through two service coordinators. They either don't know what they are doing or they are very slow in getting things done for us. The ball has been dropped many times on very important issues. In addition, my son isn't able to get any vital services at our home because we live in rural Missouri. We must travel eighty miles one way just to get one service. We have had to obtain all other services on our own and they have been paid by Medicaid. We must drive to receive these services because of the failure of the First Steps program and the cuts in Medicaid. As a result, my son may lose all services. Where will he be then?

First Steps has been very important to the development of our daughter. She has benefited greatly and I hope the program continues.

We have an outstanding service provider. Her attentiveness to our daughter's needs, regardless of a very specific and difficult diagnosis, went beyond our expectations in her level of love and concern for our family. She has been a refreshing joy to work with. Thank you!

I was not informed of the provider matrix. It would have been nice to have had that list to choose from instead of using the ones my service coordinator gave me. Also, it was never really explained exactly what services First Steps had to offer. I figured it out on my own.

First Steps in St. Louis City has made changes which have greatly improved the services. The first time I tried to get services for my son a year ago I received no help. I tried again six months later and had a wonderfully easy experience. Formally, I was a social worker, so my answers reflect this. I had knowledge of First Steps before I had children. If I hadn't, I don't know that I would have used the services without the encouragement of my son's doctor.

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Our service coordinator never returns our phone calls! I've heard from our therapists that the city or Department of Mental Health service coordinators may not feel they have a stake in spending much time with the clients. I'm changing service coordinators now so that when it comes time for transition to school, we have someone who will be available for questions.

The developmental therapist who came from Hannibal, Missouri did not know a thing about Spinal Bifida and was not up on any of the latest infant toys, learning devices or toys for children. She was very unprofessional in the way she dressed. She looked unclean and was in my son's face, which I didn't feel was appropriate. For instance, she would kiss on him, talk close, and snuggle with him.

First Steps has been an invaluable service. In a time when we felt we had little hope for our child, First Steps gave us hope, support, and direction for our child's future.

Parents need First Steps. I'm very thankful for St. Louis Children's Hospital for getting us the information we needed about First Steps. Our occupational and physical therapists are great! Our son is a different child!

The staff was prompt, courteous, concerned, respectful, and on-the-move to get the therapy my daughter needed. The therapist is great with our daughter. She has really improved with First Steps. It is an absolutely irreplaceable help to children and their parents in need of help. Please KEEP First Steps as wonderful as it is and available to all who need it. Thank you so much for First Steps.

The matrix set up is difficult to use and the format needs improvement. Our service coordinator seemed to fight against most therapy our son needed. Funding (via the matrix) qualified therapists to work with our son was difficult. We spent a significant amount of time educating the therapists on what our son needed. Many of the therapists failed to look at the symptoms and needs and simply stuck on the diagnosis. Too many meetings "must take place" for any changes in the IFSP. There are more efficient ways to get everyone's input, i.e., email and phone versus expensive meetings.

Our family life would not be as successful if we had not received services through First Steps. My daughter had very limited language skills and had difficulty socializing with people outside of the immediate family. After therapy, she has made enormous progress. She is now a little social butterfly who uses language to express her needs and desires. I am very hopeful by kindergarten she will be caught up to the other children her age. The therapists we have had for the past year have been lifesavers.

Overall, I think First Steps is a great program and I hope it continues to help children and their families for years to come.

Our speech therapist has been sensational. She has helped my son progress and taught me to help him speak. His speech therapy has been a 100% positive experience.

Everyone we have had contact with in this program have been wonderful. Our family is very grateful for this help and my child is improving just in the short time our therapists have been working with them.

First Steps is an excellent program! Alone, as a new first-time mom of premature triplets, I would not have been able to identify physical and behavioral problems in each of my kids. Because the therapists were seeing my kids monthly we got the treatments they needed and I was trained in how to help my kids develop. Thank you for this great program!

Our IFSP service coordinator has been basically non-existent throughout the whole process. A meeting was cancelled and she has not called back to reschedule. The program itself has worked well to provide us with therapists/services, but the IFSP process has never been explained to us.

It was very confusing to have an intake coordinator say to me, "pick a speech therapist," when I didn't know Jack from Jill. It was a very lengthy intake process from start to finish when my daughter finally began receiving services THREE months later because we had to wait on the "paperwork." My child and family have learned a lot from the First Steps program. Excellent service!

Thanks to this program my son has made tremendous improvement in his disability. It really has helped a lot to have the traveling therapists that come to his daycare.

Our daughter has benefited greatly from this program and I can't imagine what we would have done without it. We have been lucky enough to find therapists in our area with lots of experience and that get along well with our daughter. I believe the key to a good First Steps program is first knowing that it is available. Secondly, having experienced therapists, and last, that it is affordable to all who need it.

My son came into this world with less expectations than ever. But, he has proven that early intervention through therapy has put him where he is today. He's walking and talking which was not expected. Thank you First Steps. We love you and great work!

All of the therapists and our service coordinator have been amazing. Each of these people truly care about my child and his needs rather than "just putting in the time" because it's their job. We will sincerely miss each and every one of them as they have made a large impact on our lives and became part of our family.

The services I really needed are unavailable through First Steps. I really liked my nutritionist. She is the only one that did help.

First Steps is a great blessing to our family. Thank you!

My son was accepted in November for First Steps. I have not heard from our ongoing coordinator since. I called our service coordinator and complained and was able to get a new one, but still haven't heard from anyone! I don't think my son and family are getting the full benefits of this program.

Since my son has been in the First Steps program we have seen a big difference in his speech development. His attitude and frustration level has also improved dramatically. My son wasn't speaking very many words and was below his average in speech. The First Steps program has also helped us learn to cope with his and our frustration. Before we started, we spent many sleepless nights crying and wondering what we could do for our son. Now we have help and we have learned different ways of communication. I honestly don't know what we would have done without First Steps.

I think you need to put this survey in smaller, everyday words. If I don't understand some of the big words, it gets old having to look up the words in your language compared to mine! I also think there should be a dress code when working with kids. No low cut shirts! Cover yourselves! It's bad enough that it's on everything. But, when working with my son and teaching him to talk, it is not the place I want to see a ladies BOOBS! No, there hasn't been anything said to the teacher because she is really good with my son and I don't know how to tell her to stop wearing low cut shirts.

When we had our child, we didn't know what to do or how we would make it. Thank God for First Steps. Our son has wonderful therapists that come to our home to help us learn about and understand Down's Syndrome. He is almost three years old now and we will miss the therapists. They have been our backbone. Thanks for everything.

Our service coordinator is the best! I love her. In addition, my daughter's therapists are all a wonderful team of people for which we are grateful. It was frightening when the day after our daughter was born, she had a stroke. Children's Hospital reassured us by telling us about a program called "First Steps" that would help us. I had never heard of it before then. The program has been a real blessing to our family. I was very concerned that we would lose the program when Governor Blunt took office. I hope it does stay in place.

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Our service coordinator could be a little more involved. Our service providers are wonderful. They are constantly working hard for our son. Where our service coordinator is lacking, the providers are making up for it. First Steps is an important program that really affects Missouri. It would be a real tragedy for Missouri's disabled children to lose this program. For some children, First Steps is their only form of intervention.

This is a godsend. My daughter receives speech therapy due to delayed speech. Since receiving therapy, she has started to vocalize more, but more importantly, our provider has most likely identified the problem. My daughter's tonsils were found to be very large, which made it difficult for her to vocalize. She suggested that my daughter see a specialist. This week the specialist indicated that this may very well be the case. They will be removing my daughter's tonsils in about four weeks. I suspect that after that it will be smooth sailing because a First Steps provider was able to detect a problem that even her pediatrician hadn't.

I feel the First Steps program is very beneficial. The services provided are a huge help with the development of our son. The exercises and activities that we are shown are phenomenal.

The program has worked to obtain all the services and equipment we have needed and has made a huge difference in my daughter's development.

This program has made a very positive impact in my daughter's development.

I am extremely happy with our physical therapist. She works so well with our son and he is responding beautifully.

The intake coordinator was rude and made the decision on her own not to accept our child because she felt that she really didn't need services. She "went through the motions" and then denied her. I went to a neurologist and he wrote a script for physical, occupational, and speech therapy and referred us to the Autism Clinic in Columbia. The Autism Clinic said that her developmental delay is two years behind, she has a brain malfunction, and is mentally challenged. There were no services available in our area for in-home services, except for physical therapy, until December 2004. All of the help that I have received has been because I took her, through Medicaid, on my own. Finally, I pleaded with my service coordinator and she was finally enrolled in a special education preschool program at age three. I have been trying to get her into services since she was one! This could be a great program but it needs providers for rural areas and more caring personnel.

First Steps has been a great help! I now understand my son's disability and how I can help him. They have helped us receive the help we needed for him and thanks to them my son is better off!

First Steps is a great program. Now that my son can communicate, he's a lot less frustrated. He loves books and that has helped to develop his speech.

My first coordinator did not help me at all. My current coordinator is wonderful!

We just love the relationship our daughter has with her therapists. She adores them all. They are very kind and gentle. They are great with her. She has achieved all her goals that we had planned before starting the program. We are very grateful for First Steps.

We have benefited through the First Steps program. However, we have no service providers in our area through First Steps. We have had to find our own providers and pay for them with private insurance. Our service coordinator has been a great help. There are just not enough providers in rural areas.

I am so grateful for First Steps being a huge part of our's and our granddaughter's life. They have been there through everything. If it wasn't for First Steps, we would not have known her problems as quickly as we had. They fixed up our granddaughter. They are a big part of our lives and, if not for them, we wouldn't be where we are today. They deserve reward. Thank you First Steps.

I would like to thank all the people that helped my daughter get into First Steps. Her therapists are wonderful.

This has been the best program ever to help my little boy. I recommend this program to anyone. Our therapists have worked well with my little boy and they have all been a pleasure to work with. To me, they are like a part of my family. The only thing is that we need more physical therapists available in Howard county. Thank you so much for offering this program.

The therapists are courteous and polite to me and my son.

They have helped my son.

First Steps has been great for us since the re-design in March of 2003. My daughter has made some great advances in all areas of development. Our service coordinator is excellent. Without First Steps, I would not be able to work as I would have to travel to a clinic. Thank you so much for everything.

My child is very behind, so not much has changed.

Great program! We are foster parents. I worked special education for seven years before quitting to foster parent.

I have two preemies. I still don't know much about Mr. Blunt's plan. We can't afford First Steps if they go through our insurance. It would be too expensive. I hope the program stays the same. Since we've been in the program eighteen months, maybe we are covered by the clause. Thank you for everything.

I don't know where we would be without First Steps. Thank you for all your help.

Without the First Steps program, my son may not have been able to begin school with his peers. Now, we feel he has a chance. Thank you.

I wish there was a reliable speech therapist in our area.

There should be a faster way to get the children started with physical therapy. It took too long to get the therapy started. It would be nice if we had choices with the occupational therapy. I understand that you offer only one at this time.

We are relieved that the program was kept in the state budget. It is vital for our special needs kids.

We are so grateful that competent, caring people are able to come to our home and help assess, advise, and actively teach and train us as they work with our daughter week in and week out! First Steps makes a very difficult and demanding situation much more doable! Thank you.

I have been blown away by the First Steps program. My family has received awesome therapists and our coordinator is always ready to help and listen. Thank God for First Steps.

Every person I spoke with through First Steps was very positive and responsive. All of the women who saw our son and evaluated the different areas of my concerns offered realistic and helpful suggestions. I am very pleased and grateful for the entire program.

Our service coordinator has helped us in so many ways. Especially now, since dealing with the school district has been hard. Our service coordinator has helped us deal with them and get the services my daughter deserves.

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I am thankful we have the First Steps program! My son receives speech and language services and the program has allowed him to progress in this area of delay. Without the services, he would still be behind peers in this area because of the ridiculous cost of private services, which most insurance companies, including ours, will not cover. Thank you First Steps for giving my child a fighting chance.

When I had my daughter, the hospital gave me a paper about First Steps and that was all. Since we didn't have a confirmed diagnosis of Down's Syndrome, the first service coordinator did not help me. I asked her to help me with financial papers and she sat there and did not help me. Now, I have a new service coordinator and everything is great.

Without First Steps, I feel our family would be lost and my daughter would be considered disabled everywhere she went. She has become a normal child, as her disability is not the first thing you notice about her. The therapists that First Steps set us up with at DCO are wonderful and more like friends than associates. They care for my daughter and show love for her.

Our son was born sixteen weeks premature. First Steps has been a tremendous help in providing therapy to our son and in teaching us how to work with him too. My husband and I are professionals but have no medical training and this is our only child. It is so nice to interact with therapists on a regular basis and have them suggest specific things to work on each week. The First Steps program has helped our son greatly - more than words can express.

I would recommend this program to any parent with a special needs child. As working parents, we were able to get assistance provided at our child's daycare.

I am very happy with the First Steps program. Thank you!

First Steps is, and was, a godsend for our two youngest children. Our son would never have been speaking or running without First Steps intervention. Our daughter is now receiving the benefits of First Steps and I can see a vast improvement in her abilities. I cannot imagine their lives without your help. Zero to three years is such a huge development milestone that guides the rest of their lives, and they will have a more promising future with First Steps help!

Thank you.

When we started First Steps, our daughter wasn't even crawling. Now she is running and jumping. Although we have insurance, it would not have covered the sessions we needed. Even if it would have, we could not have afforded the \$25 a session co pay for physical therapy.

Since January, we have worked with two different speech pathologists in the area of expressive language. The second pathologist, after many visits, said expressive language seemed to be the main concern. I know this from our IFSP meeting in January, which she did not attend. Even after this statement was made, the speech pathologist continued to work on receptive language issues rather than expressive issues. I spoke to the service coordinator and she gave me a website to check on other speech pathologists who might be available. After doing my own research, I have requested a new one and I am waiting to hear from that person. My husband and I are hopeful that this person will be able to work well with our daughter and, most importantly, be able to help her to improve her areas of weakness and concern.

These wonderful people have made life a lot better for us and other families also. They have laid the foundation for further special education and built the first floor.

Thank you First Steps.

The occupational and physical therapists we have had for our son have both been very professional and dedicated to improving his condition. First Steps has been an invaluable resource to us as parents, enabling our son to be the best that he can be.

I try to get the help of our service coordinator, but they don't return or reply to calls or faxes. Our service coordinator does not work with our family in a timely way. It took three months to get session one and then two more weeks for session two. I ask for the results from my therapist and instructor but never received them. I asked for things that could help reinforce my child's therapy but never received anything. I believe that First Steps is a waste of taxpayers money and a waste of time for parents who can't wait until the therapist and coordinator have time to help and/or respond. If they cannot help, they should say so. This way the child doesn't become further behind and the parents can seek other help. I was so disappointed in the program that started out as hopeful. By the way, my child only had a severe speech delay. This might seem minor to everyone but our family. My daughter is now enrolled with a therapist who cares and is responding to my questions. Too bad that I had to wait and seek an actual physician in speech and spend \$120.00 per session, three times a week.

It took too long to receive physical and occupational services (almost two months after initial evaluation). Speech therapy was initiated right away.

I feel I do the job of our service coordinator when asked to get some information on our child's condition and what to expect in the future. She told us to, "look online." I do wish the providers would be a little bit more aggressive in our therapy. But, we do appreciate all the therapy and it has improved our child's development.

My child was most needful in speech and I don't feel he was helped very much because he needed tubes in his ears and it seemed the speech therapists didn't always show up to give him his speech therapy. Even after he received tubes in his ears, he really didn't progress very fast in his speech.

We were very pleased with all the therapists and feel these services were a great benefit. However, due to First Steps "qualifications," we were unable to use otherwise qualified therapists in our area. We had to drive three hours to get occupational and physical therapy even though we had professional therapists twenty minutes away. I think that First Steps "training" could be done away with. Physical and occupational therapists, by profession, are required to take classes to keep them up to date in their fields. Because of the distance we drive, we had to limit our child's therapy to bi-weekly rather than weekly visits, as her doctor recommended.

It's not like our son is mentally incapable of doing everyday things. He is very bright and energetic. His "disabilities" don't hinder him from doing anything but I am concerned in some ways. No one knows what is wrong with his thumbs. It's like they've never seen anything like it. I don't know that they really care all that much.

This is a wonderful service. Thank you for taking care of us so well. My son is doing very well and will be going into the elementary program in the fall to continue services.

I'm very happy with the First Steps program. It's helped me and my son to get the help he needs through physical and occupational therapy. My son loves his therapists and enjoys going to them. I've seen a big difference in his development with therapy. Without the First Steps program, I don't think we would be able to get my son help since we are a one-income family. Thus, I know there are other people in the same situation with children with more severe disabilities than my son. Now I hear that First Steps may be taken away or reduced. This, I find, should hurt a lot of families and especially the children in Missouri because there are a lot of low-income families with children and most of these families care enough for their children to want them to fit in with others their own age. First Steps is a big key to all of this. Taking away or reducing the price in First Steps in Missouri would really hurt a lot of children. Therefore, my main point is, please keep First Steps in Missouri because children with special needs deserve as much a chance as any other child. Without First Steps, a lot of families could not give their special needs child the help that they would need to succeed in life.

As a speech/language pathologist and a mom who has taken all the First Steps Modules, I feel my background education is what has helped in accessing First Steps services. After moving from one SPOE area to another and initiating services for the qualifying child and one who did not until later, the following issues with the First Steps system need to be noted: Access to quality professionals who know about infants is difficult. Obtaining timely responses from SPOE's needs to be addressed. Taking over three weeks to return a call to initiate a referral is inexcusable. When moving from one SPOE area to another, files were sent to the wrong place and services delayed as a result. Overall, First Steps providers have been helpful and supportive in increasing our ability to raise our children's areas of development in the home and community. Providers have given us information or answered questions in relation to our children's development. Access to providers who have worked with us and for our children is available through First Steps. Access to these providers would be difficult without First Steps.

The First Steps program has been like a miracle to our family. With having two other children, and my husband and I working full-time, First Steps has helped to provide the therapy, equipment, and services we wouldn't have been able to afford otherwise. This program is most valuable!

First Steps has had great benefits for my daughter. Therapy is a great playtime for her and she doesn't even know that she is working on her mobility. It's also a great learning experience for me. I appreciate how openly I can communicate with her therapists and coordinator. They are always open to my suggestions, respect my opinions, and are there to listen. Thanks.

I have a problem receiving monthly reports from the independent therapist. The service coordinator has also called several times with no follow-through with the therapist.

Thanks! We are glad there is something out there for our baby.

Thanks for everything! First Steps is an awesome program. Please don't take it away. First Steps is a wonderful program and a real lifesaver for our family. We have two children with hearing loss and both wear aids in both ears. Our first child, is now 15 years old and was born with a hearing loss, but it was not discovered until her kindergarten screening. Our third child, now two years old, was born with an almost identical hearing loss and it was discovered before we left the hospital. We had a middle child, a boy, who is now 13 years old. He does not have a hearing loss, he just doesn't listen. Thank goodness for the newly required hearing tests for all newborns. Because of this, we discovered our youngest daughter had a hearing loss before she was in kindergarten. We were immediately introduced to the First Steps program. We then began the process of obtaining hearing aids for her and working with her speech therapist. The younger years are a crucial time for speech development. With the aids, she hears the sounds she needs too. Kindergarten is too late and although our 15 year old daughter has done very well, sometimes when she speaks, it is hard to understand what she is saying because she does not pronounce her words or annunciate properly. With two children in hearing aids, it is very expensive and our insurance, which is set up for older adults, pays for one set of hearing aids for life. With our youngest child, First Steps took care of the first set and we are very thankful for that. Seems it is getting easier and easier to keep them in her ears. As an infant, we would find her chewing on the ear mold. Now, they don't seem to bother her as much. I am so very thankful for everyone who has helped her and us, both emotionally and financially, through this program. I truly hope that this program is around for others who have special needs children

My son's speech has improved dramatically since we started First Steps. Being able to understand him is priceless. It became clear to me the first time he said, "I love you mommy," that First Steps was the best thing we could have ever done to help him. Thank you all so much!

We recently enrolled our son in preschool and he will be aging out of First Steps. But to go into the preschool and meet with all of our First Steps service providers and preschool personnel, it truly felt like a team of people wanting to figure out what was best for my son. It was a great feeling.

Thank you so much for First Steps! It would be very hard for us to get the therapy that our child needs if the program was cancelled. More families can benefit from this program.

I have had nothing but a good experience with my First Steps providers and all the people I have worked with there. I had three children, all under the age of three when we first adopted them and First Steps really helped us through some hard times. I back this program 100%.

Our occupational therapist is great. We are having issues finding a physical therapist due to a shortage of therapists in our area. But, everyone keeps working on finding someone. We really appreciate all the help we have gotten from First Steps.

I have learned to advocate not only for my own son, but also for the First Steps program. I wrote many letters to representatives to keep funding First Steps. First Steps and the therapists that have worked with my son have been great. On question 13 I marked, "Disagree," because my son has a form of Dwarfism and all of us (therapists and family) are learning as we go.

This program has been very beneficial to us and our special needs child. We need this program to assist our child. I hope Missouri continues to have this program. All of the staff at First Steps have been great.

It took four weeks and two complaints by our service coordinator before our speech therapist called me back. I am very disappointed and I feel she has delayed our child more than he needed to be. I am disappointed that there are not enough speech therapists in our county and surrounding counties. Our doctors recommended speech therapy on March 3, 2005. He has had one session since then. He speaks no words.

This is an absolutely invaluable program. My son is one of only 70 cases in the United States. He has very specialized needs. Without First Steps, he would need a very high level of services when he starts public school, even though he has a 24 hour private duty nurse paid for by my private insurance. My son's care costs my insurance thousands of dollars a month.

Let me make one thing very clear. Without First Steps we would be lost and our child would not be improving and progressing toward normalcy. Thank you to all those involved.

I am glad the program isn't going to be cut. I don't know what I, or my child, would have done without these services. All of the team involved is so loving and concerned with my daughter's progress.

I cannot say enough for what First Steps has done for my son and our family. He has come so far and learned so much in such a small amount of time. I am pleased with how professional everyone is in First Steps. Thank you.

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I have been very satisfied with the professionalism, kindness, and friendliness that the First Steps program has shown to my child as well as my family. I feel very grateful to know and be a part of "the family." Thank you very much.

The First Steps program is a wonderful program. The therapists and our service coordinator are like family.

I am a certified teacher who had premature twin boys. I had no idea what problems we would face. First Steps has given us the guidance needed to help our boys in every way possible. My little guys have made wonderful progress because of First Steps.

Thank you for this wonderful program.

I'm really impressed with First Steps and what it has helped me accomplish for my daughter. I really like our service coordinator and how she helps us get the best help we can. I really appreciate her.

Thank you so much for these services. Even though we have only started, I am really happy with all services that has been provided by First Steps. Everyone works very well with my son. Thanks.

Service cordinators, I had two, seemed burned out. I hear more about acronyms and what isn't available rather than what is. The providers are wonderful! I hate that we have lost so many providers in north Missouri. I drive one hour twice a week to Moberly and love their dedication to my child and their ability to educate parents.

I feel it's hit or miss as to whether a person gets the services he/she really needs. Never having been through this before, I was not aware of what my child really needed. Come to find out, the more I studied on the internet and continued asking questions, I found my child had a lot of sensory issues. The other therapists would have probably been more beneficial if the sensory issues had been addressed first. We didn't get an occupational evaluation until March 9, 2005. In addition to this, it's wonderful that these services are available to us, but unfortunately, the providers for Lincoln county are few and far between. ABA Implementers are no where to be found. I'm having to try and find people looking for a job and refer them to my ABA consultant. This creates more work and more stress on an already unbearable situation. What makes me qualified to hire an ABA Implementer? Sometimes I feel like I should go back to school and study all aspects of my child's disability so I can work more efficiently with First Steps. I don't have an answer, but I think there needs to be changes for the better. Don't get me wrong, I thank God First Steps was there for us. I just think there could be improvements made.

I feel First Steps is an extraordinary program that has helped our family and our son. He has progressed along successfully. The therapists were all great. They helped him tremendously. The only complaint I have is with the service coordinators. The original one quit without telling anyone. The second one seemed like she had too much to handle and seemed to be confused about what was going on and what he needed. She was kind, but very disorganized. Thank you for asking for opinions to continue to strive for excellence. This program is great. With the attitude of wanting to know how you're doing, good or bad, this program will continue to provide very necessary help for our children. They all deserve it.

I am thankful for First Steps. I was worried about my son's physical development. He has Down's Syndrome and wasn't walking or moving toward that at a year. I was able to get a physical therapist through First Steps and it helped me and my son find new ways to work with each other. It gave me confidence and support to know he was going to be able to walk.

We really appreciate the services provided. I know our son would not be doing as well without them. The only trouble we've had, and its minor, is that sometimes things he needs for his hearing aids have not been covered and the school has said it's only our SPO denying such charges (like Audio wipes, batteries, the smaller items). It's difficult to know what is our responsibility and when it changes.

The First Steps program has been a complete success for our son. It has helped our son progress physically and mentally in ways we never expected. Without this program, our son would not be where he is today. We are so thankful and blessed for this program.

Our First Steps providers have been wonderful. They have helped us a lot. It is great to have them.

I just wanted to thank you for this program. It has really helped my child.

The only concern I have is the number of physical therapists there are available for my area. I have gone outside of First Steps because there was only one with openings. Her and I didn't see eye-to-eye on some things.

Our service coordinator is wonderful. All the services are wonderful and our child is now talking and others can understand what he is saying. The speech teacher is great. We just started with a new occupational therapist. I'm sure that we will grow to love her too. Thank you so much.

I don't know where we would be without First Steps. Our team of providers work very hard to ensure that I am educated so that I can help my daughter develop correctly. I don't think I can truly express in words how important it is that this program continue in Missouri. To balance the State's budget on the backs of disabled babies is a SIN!

First Steps really should add an option for "Bi-racial" or "Multi-racial" instead of making parents pick.

My twins have both been a part of First Steps since I brought them home from the hospital. They were very premature and First Steps has helped them "catch up" much faster than was predicted.

We are truly pleased with the services we receive from First Steps. We, as a whole family, benefit from this service. Since one service coordinator has changed from independent to St. Charles, that service has declined. I realize their numbers are abundant, but I would appreciate my phone calls returned. Instead, I call until I am contacted, maybe three or four times. We know our child is progressing greatly from this program. Thanks!

I do not feel this program should be cut. It has truly been a blessing for our family.

This is an essential program! Kids not helped at this level can suffer for years at great expense.

First Steps is an invaluable program without which my son would have fallen further behind children his age. The staff and therapists they employ are consistently working towards improving my child's development by suggesting additional activities and services available to our family. They are respectful and caring individuals whom we are going to miss when our son transitions.

I am grateful to have First Steps. I think my child benefits greatly from the services. We were stuck in a transition between service coordinators and our one year IFSP was two months overdue.

My child, at eighteen months, didn't even make sounds. Now, at age two, she can talk in almost complete sentences. She is now catching up to all the rest of the two-year-olds we see around. I am a single working mother who greatly appreciates the help we have gotten from this program. Thank you!

Our service coordinator and our service providers are very knowledgeable and always willing to answer questions or help us. They all have helped with suggestions or ideas for home activities or behavior/development changes.

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My son's physical therapist has done an amazing job with him. He's come a very long way. I think this program is great. If it weren't for First Steps, I don't know how far my son would be by now.

First Steps is an incredible program that has helped our son in so many ways. He was diagnosed with Charge Syndrome and we actually have a physical therapist who had other patients with Charge. She knows exactly what to do. She is a wonderful therapist and an inspiration to our family. I don't know where we'd be without her, or the other therapists our son has had. Thanks.

Our son has received therapy that is helping him to develop. I don't know what we would have done without First Steps.

This is a wonderful program and we are very thankful to be a part of it. Our therapists are wonderful and we feel like they have become part of the family.

First Steps is a wonderful program! It has been so useful for my twins and our entire family. We are so appreciative of this resource.

Our family has benefited from First Steps more than words can express. We have seen our daughter come a long way and it is all due to the services and therapists we receive from First Steps. We would be at a loss without this program. Thank you for all that you do!

First Steps was recommended by our pediatrician and they declined my son. Later, my son was diagnosed with Autism and he was finally accepted into the program, but not without reluctance on their part. That was frustrating.

We're very fortunate to have access to this program. It has done wonderful things for our child. This program should continue to be funded to the fullest extent regardless of budgetary or political issues.

I feel that the First Steps program has really helped my daughter and I hope it can continue to help other families in need.

First Steps is a vital program to help children with special needs prior to school age. We have been very pleased with the services we have received and credit the ongoing success of our daughter's speech to be directly related to the First Steps program. We gladly accepted our adopted child knowing she would need speech due to her cleft palate because we knew First Steps was available if we needed it. We have been very pleased with the service we have been provided. We hope services will continue for those that need it. Thank you.

Our child no longer is receiving therapy, however, may need it in the future. She has truly benefited from the First Steps program. I was impressed with everyone involved.

I support this program 100%. My daughter's language has improved so much. I am very impressed by First Steps!

First Steps is a wonderful program.

Great program!

I hate to think of where our son and our family would be without the First Steps program. Our son's diagnosis and prognosis appeared very grim almost two years ago. He has surprised and even astounded his medical specialists because of our First Steps team. His preschool teachers have even predicted him to be in a typical kindergarten classroom with his twin sister. Thanks so much.

I have nothing but good things to say about the First Steps program. This is probably, in large part, because my service coordinator and all of my therapists have been absolutely wonderful. My son has gone from a baby who did not interact at all with the world around him to a sweet, lively, funny, and very engaging toddler. First Steps introduced me to a world of people and services I never knew existed and taught me to be a better parent to both of my children. First Steps also showed me that I do have the strength, patience, and capabilities needed to raise a child with special needs and to greatly appreciate how special my child is and how lucky I am to be the parent of a special needs child. I can't thank First Steps enough. I will miss everyone so much when we transition to the school district. It's like saying goodbye to a family of people I can't imagine not seeing everyday

Our physical therapist is wonderful with our son. As a first time mother, both my son and I learned a great deal through First Steps. The program is invaluable.

Our service coordinator has been an absolute delight to work with. She is responsive, compassionate, caring, gentle, well informed, and professional. We love her!

The program is phenomenal. I have a seven-and-a-half-year-old son who was born with Cerebral Palsy and he was a part of this life saving program. It's as beneficial to the parents as it is to the kids who are involved. Thank you for continuing to provide the much needed care for these special children.

I wish I had been encouraged to check into First Steps sooner. The program is wonderful and my son has greatly benefited.

I feel First Steps has been an invaluable service to me and my family. I couldn't ask for more knowledgeable and nice people that I've had the pleasure to work with. Having the resources of First Steps available whenever we needed it has helped our son be all he can be. Born with Trisomy 21, he has made remarkable strides. If he started developing bad habits (i.e., sucking his food instead of chewing), I would discuss this with his occupational therapist and she'd give us things to work on and the issue would be resolved. I would not know how to fix this without their expertise. I do wish our service coordinator would have talked to us about an occupational therapist. I don't recall that even being an option. Our physical therapist actually suggested stopping physical therapy and going to a developmental therapist. I feel we should have started with a developmental therapist. Each specialty we had worked well together and were all invaluable in their specialized training and knowledge, but the developmental therapy brought it all together and helped coordinate strategies to figure out how my son could learn more efficiently. All in all, we were extremely grateful to have this service fully funded and provided to us. We would not have been able to afford even a small co pay for these services without it dramatically effecting our financial budget.

Although the therapist and coordinator did not know very much about my son's disability, they have taken the time to research it in order to provide him services appropriate for him. Everyone I have had contact with have been helpful, caring, courteous, and overall, very supportive. Our family greatly appreciates this service program.

Though our son only had services for a short period of time, our speech therapist has made tremendous gains. The therapists and service coordinator were quick to make necessary changes as we found out shortly after starting First Steps, that our son had Pervasive Developmental Delay (PDD). These services have helped us cope and learn to change how we interact with our son. Many thanks.

My wife and I are very pleased that Missouri had provided service for our son's speech this past year. This service was extremely valuable to our family. Thank you.

I am very pleased with the services I have received for my child. First Steps therapy has taught me a lot about exercises and things I can do to help my child's development. As an educator myself, I feel this early intervention is the best thing I can do for my child to enhance her progress.

Our speech therapist is fabulous. She has made our son's speech sessions fun and valuable. He doesn't seem to realize that he isn't "playing." She is a wonderful asset to the First Steps program.

We feel that without First Steps, our son would not be doing as well as he is. Our hope is that by the time he starts school, he will not need any further assistance.

The First Steps program has made such an impact for good in my son's life. I am thankful for the opportunity he has had to be involved in First Steps. First Steps has provided him a way to receive help before his third birthday, which has been invaluable to our family and especially to him. I cannot imagine how much harder his life would be now if he hadn't started receiving services when he did.

This is a great service which needs to be continued to be supported by the state.

The service coordinator that I have now is spectacular, however, the first one that I had, that initially contacted me right after my child was born, was very unorganized and always in a hurry. I didn't feel like she was very understanding or willing to get things started. She didn't return phone calls for weeks.

Thank you for providing such a wonderful program. It has helped our family in so many ways. If we did not have this program, I don't think I would have even known where to go for help with the special needs our son has. Thank you!

It's a shame that there is actually discussion about terminating this program.

I had a hard time getting the program started after my daughter came home from the hospital. I called and left messages several times and didn't receive a call back for several weeks. My service coordinator even called for me several times. The IFSP meeting was scheduled without my knowing of the time and date. I found out when it was when the occupational therapist called and told me she would be there. Dealing with the person who sets everything up was the hardest part. But, all in all, First Steps has been very beneficial to my child with Down's Syndrome. The therapists are great.

The First Steps program has made such a difference in our life. I can't even imagine where my daughter would be with her language, gross and fine motor skills, and socialization skills without First Steps. Our service coordinator has been wonderful! She has not only been extremely helpful, but has become a friend. She has been there for the many triumphs and has been a shoulder to cry on during the down times. She is truly a wonderful person. Thank you to all involved in First Steps. It is a fabulous program. One can only truly appreciate it when they are blessed with a child with special needs. Hats off!

The therapists rescheduled our appointments frequently because, "they had other plans." But, when, or if, we needed to reschedule for whatever reason, they don't/won't work with us to reschedule. We would just have to miss that week. We have three therapists (occupational, physical and speech). Speech is the only one who stays for her full hour. Our service coordinator has me calling all of our therapists to schedule our six month meeting. Isn't that her job? I haven't even met her yet. She didn't come to our IFSP and, in fact, didn't call me for the first time until we were two months into therapy.

Thank you very much!

We have been impressed with all aspects of First Steps and our physical therapist. We feel the early intervention is and was vital for our son. All children impacted by this program have a much brighter future. Thank you.

Not happy at all with the intake coordinator for our family. She was very, very rude to us and has no business being in this line of work.

I am very pleased with the services my child is receiving and will hopefully continue to receive. It would be a shame if Blunt takes this program away from innocent children. I am a classroom teacher and I am very aware of the benefits of early intervention.

Excellent program!

My first coordinator did not help me with getting a brace I needed. She left it up to the occupational therapist to order. She complained about receiving paychecks from First Steps continually. She also procrastinated on everything. She said she could not find a physical therapist in my area and that I should continue to look for one on the matrix. Our family was shocked at this because our hospital and Parents as Teachers talked so well about First Steps and how much help we would receive in a timely fashion. We now have a great coordinator that is all that we expected. So, I just wanted to make note from question 12 that some coordinators are useless, but most are very helpful.

If I didn't have First Steps, our son wouldn't be getting the help he needs. I know he may or may not progress with his disability, but all help is well worth a shot.

First Steps is an important program for families and children needing services. As an educator myself, I know the value of early intervention. This program will help my children be more successful in their future learning situations.

Our son has fine and gross motor delays due to surgeries and hospitalizations as a newborn. He has made leaps and bounds in his development, all due to our physical and occupational therapists. He is not caught up yet, but we can finally see the light at the end of the tunnel. The physical and occupational therapists have helped us in our communication with our son's physicians. We really struggled with our insurance company when it came to providing therapy. We are so fortunate to have First Steps. Thank you for all you do.

Having the therapists make home visits is a key element to make the program successful. We would not be able to participate otherwise. Our child needs early intervention to develop properly. We are thankful for First Steps.

We do not know what we would do without the First Steps program! Our child, who has Cerebral Palsy, has greatly benefited from the program.

Some concerns seemed to be dismissed. Many times I was told that his behavior and actions were just "his age," which may be true, but when you look at everything else, it was not reassuring. Most of our therapists are extremely good and explain why and what they're doing. But there is one that I could really use more feedback from. I feel that this is a wonderful program and everyone seems to be looking out for the children so that not one of them is left behind and that is great. I have seen a huge improvements, but we still need help in social, emotional, and behavioral skills. His language has been delayed and was seriously behind, but it has now improved and he has about fifty words.

As a past special education teacher I know how to work with students with special needs but not necessarily a baby. Without all the therapy my son has received, he would not be where he is now. Thanks so much!

First Steps is a wonderful program and it has helped our family a great deal.

I wanted to express how important it has been for my child to be involved with the First Steps program. My husband and I are very grateful to have an organization such as First Steps to help him along and to develop in his early years as he should. Thank you to everyone who has ever been involved. Matt Blunt should hope that his newborn baby doesn't require any special attention in his lifetime. He would soon understand why it is so important.

Our service coordinator was a big help in getting us started with my son's therapy. She gave me the support and information to help me help my son. Thanks to her help and guidance, my son is on the way to hearing and talking again with his Cochlear Implant. Without First Steps, I'm not sure things would have happened so quickly and our son may still not have heard yet.

First Steps has been vital to our daughter learning to eat by mouth. She has a g-tube, and if it weren't for an occupational therapist being available to us because of First Steps, she would still be using a g-tube full-time and not eating from a spoon. First Steps has made a huge impact on our daughter's daily living skills.

I knew nothing about First Steps. Before my child was even released from the hospital, First Steps contacted me and set up the first meeting. It was so great to have such a great service seek us out because we were so busy and a little overwhelmed.

We had the best therapist for our child. We would have been lost without them. With the services we have received through First Steps, our daughter has made some major progress. We saw a big improvement.

First Steps has greatly influenced our family's quality of life. We feel more hopeful about our child's future. We have the tools we need to help her develop. Our family has come together and, with the help of our therapists, we have been able to better deal with the emotional issues that came with having a disabled child.

Initial attempts to contact First Steps for an evaluation were very difficult and took a long time. There were multiple messages left with no return calls. However, once we established a service coordinator and conducted evaluations, all calls are returned in a timely fashion.

This is my second child going through the First Steps program. With my first child, I did use the help of our service coordinator more often because she also had a child with similar needs. First Steps made the process of early intervention work smoothly. Since my first child was so well taken care of by the professionals, we became very confident about what we needed to do to help her develop appropriately and to transfer what she was learning to the home environment. We certainly could not have achieved these same results without the help of the First Steps program. Because of our previous positive experience with the program helping my first child, the process has been easier with our second child. We are confident that with the help of the First Steps program, our second child will receive the same quality of care. So far, all of the First Steps providers have shown the knowledge and care I would expect to ensure my children become successful individuals. They are developing and learning even more than I had hoped.

I was quite disappointed in my first encounter with First Steps. My son was twenty months old when I first called. My Parents As Teachers educator gave me the number to call after our appointment. After telling the person who was my contact about my son, she told me to wait until he turned two. At twenty months old, my son was not saying any words, not mama or dada, NOTHING. We couldn't get him to repeat anything either. I was trying to "be on the ball" and get everything lined up and started as soon as possible to get him help as early as possible. Needless to say, that didn't happen. I know this ended up being only a few months later for him to actually begin his services. However, I would have rather had him start when I called the first time instead of waiting an additional four and half months. I do realize that this is all about my son, so the bottom line is, he is receiving services now and I am happy about that. I do hope that in the future, if a parent calls First Steps in the same or similar situation that I was in, that they will receive an evaluation for their child and not be "dismissed" as I was. My second encounter with First Steps has obviously been much better. Every one involved this time around has been very helpful.

They have had an incredible impact in my son's life.

Without First Steps, I don't know how we could have made it this far. Our service coordinator and all of my son's therapists are wonderful and I carefully chose the right people for him.

What a great team! Our physical therapist was, and is, fantastic.

I have really enjoyed the First Steps program. I have learned a lot and I have learned how to communicate and play with my son so that we both don't get frustrated. If it wasn't for the First Steps program, my son may have never learned how to walk or drink out of a sippy cup. I really would like to thank the First Steps program and all of my son's therapists that have been a big part of our lives and we owe them a lot. So, if you could tell them or show them in some way how much we appreciate them, we would appreciate it. Our service coordinator has answered every question I have ever had and has always been very understanding. Thanks.

I teach Early Childhood Special Education. I know the importance of early intervention services as a teacher and a parent.

My only complaint is that the speech therapist I chose at the initial First Steps interview is not the speech therapist that called and evaluated my son. Speech was my main concern because he did not comprehend the language, yet the therapist did not seem to think he had any problems. Three weeks went by before she scheduled for the first therapy visit. My son's other three therapists were very concerned about his speech and my son has made drastic improvements in the past four months. Even though I know my son still has a long way to go, he is doing better and progressing everyday. My family is much better off now that First Steps has entered into it. Not only is my son learning, but the entire family is learning along with him. We were sad, however, when our favorite therapist (occupational therapy for Sensory Integration Dysfunction) left us because she was afraid she wouldn't have a job in a couple of months. Our new occupational therapist doesn't compare.

First Steps has been an excellent resource and source of therapy for my twin girls. They were born three months early and their therapy has definitely helped them to catch up with other children their age. We are very thankful for the services and have always received service and help in a timely and respectful manner. Thanks so very much.

Just want to say thank you. Thanks to First Steps, we have wonderful therapists. We have an awesome therapist. Our child and this family love her. Our child has really done well with the program and has shown great improvements. Thank you very much First Steps.

Our speech therapist is awesome! Our son has benefited from this therapy so much. We were taught how to do simple signing to ease his frustration. He is now making several sounds and a dozen words. Thank you First Steps!

We have had a very positive experience with First Steps. Our service coordinator has been very informative, caring, and a great advocate for our son. Our therapists have been very knowledgeable and loving. First Steps is truly a vital program and we hope it stays in place for future generations!

Thank you so much for offering this program! I have been extremely pleased with everything.

Our family is very pleased with the help my daughter receives. She receives speech therapy once a week. She has already begun to make progress. We are very impressed with how easy it was to obtain this help for our daughter.

I have had such a positive experience with every person I have contact with in the First Steps program. They are so supportive in difficult circumstances. I am currently a single parent and they have helped me so much without even realizing the support they have been. They are always positive and understanding of the emotions that parents experience. I am so thankful for your involvement!

Every person we have encountered affiliated with First Steps has been so caring, knowledgeable, and professional.

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First Steps has been an invaluable program for my daughter. She has made huge strides since beginning her three different therapies. I am also very impressed, overall, with the quality of the staff you have working for you. Those that we have dealt with are very professional and take their jobs very seriously! My daughter has no diagnosis at this point in time but has mild delays in her milestones. First Steps has been and is doing a wonderful job helping to close the gaps.

The First Steps program has truly helped my daughter by providing her professional help and by teaching me and my husband stretches and exercises to help her on a daily basis. My occupational and physical therapists have shown me exercises to do with her and I honestly see marked improvement as I do the exercises they suggest. I believe my daughter will be much better off when it comes time for her to learn to walk and when she gets her leg braces because of the early intervention we have received from First Steps. We are very optimistic about her future motor skills. We have been blessed by God that our daughter's birth defect was fairly mild so, with the early intervention we have received, she will be able to function almost totally on her own. If we had not known exercises to do with her and if she had not received therapy, I don't believe this would be the case. Thank you. P.S. I also wanted to mention that our occupational therapist is awesome. She is so kind and patient and she is a great listener.

Without First Steps, our family would not have known where to turn to get help for our child. First Steps has given our son a chance at a more normal life he may not have otherwise gotten.

First Steps is a wonderful program. It has helped my son so much. I don't think he would have improved as much as he has without it. I hope they never try to do away with this program again because these children need it. Thank you.

Without the First Steps program my son would probably not be walking, as the doctors said that he wouldn't walk until age five. This program has definitely made a positive impact on the life of my family, especially my child.

We appreciate the services First Steps provides and we don't know what we would do without them!

First Steps is the best program for my daughter. She is starting to walk on her own and do other things I didn't think she would be able to do on her own. First Steps has been a very big blessing to me and her father.

Thank you First Steps! My son has a small speech delay and our therapist is wonderful with him. She has become part of the family. The progress that he's made in just six months is great. He's more confident and secure in himself and is able to carry on a conversation and we can understand him. Our Parents as Teachers referred us to First Steps and I'm so glad she did. I'm glad we made the decision to use First Steps. It has changed our son's life and ours!

First Steps has been a great resource for our family. However, it was a fight to get approved services, which was very frustrating. In fact, I feel that our twins need language development assistance, but we again have been unable to receive assistance because their development isn't "behind enough." It is very difficult as a parent to want so much for your child yet to be turned down because, in someone's opinion, they aren't far enough to warrant treatment.

Thank you for everything that the First Steps program has done for us. Every single person is wonderful.

I do not get consistent feedback from my service coordinator at all times. Perhaps this isn't supposed to happen but I would think otherwise would be the case. Some therapists services did not seem to improve and/or be in time with goals established.

I have not begun to use specific services. I have enrolled in First Steps and am waiting until she is developmentally a little older. She is a preemie and is only three months old developmentally.

My husband and I do not know where we would be without First Steps. As a first time parent, I had enough to worry about without a diagnosis. When we started with First Steps, knowledgeable people came in to help calm my fears and show me how to help my son reach his maximum potential.

Coordinators need to give the family and its therapists adequate notice prior to IFSP due date. Also, the coordinator should arrange for adequate time for therapists and families to meet, rather than the family having to do it. This program has helped our daughter tremendously and we're grateful to have it!

Our therapist has been a HUGE help in helping with the kids skills and keeping them on track towards staying at par or above. I wish we could have her stay longer and visit more. The kids love seeing her!

I appreciate all that the First Steps program does in assisting the parents in bridging the gap to their small one's needs by sign language, positive teaching, and always being up front and available for all our questions. I appreciate everyone that is continually fighting emotionally, spiritually, and financially to keep First Steps alive and breathing. P.S. Is it possible to get a listing of schools in the Kansas City area that are suitable for my child's needs? Thank you.

The services we received through First Steps has helped us to feel more confident about our son's future. We feel that we are doing everything possible to provide the opportunities that he needs to reach his full potential, just as we have with our other child.

THANK YOU! This program has made a huge impact on our child. Both of us have learned so much from this program. Early teaching and learning is the key. This program is the golden key. I cannot thank you enough.

First Steps provided assistance to us as parents as we learned to help our son past his ASD/PDD diagnosis. Some of the therapists were very effective. The First Steps therapists have been subject to inexcusable turnover, tardiness, and absenteeism. We've never sustained any real momentum with our programs due to turnover of staff. There is a severe lack of qualified ABA therapists within the First Steps program. There needs to be a greater focus on training and obtaining qualified talent. With a focus on this, the cost savings could be put back into increased pay. What level of quality should we expect for \$10 per person?

We have a very responsive, organized, and efficient coordinator. I firmly believe my daughter would have not developed appropriately without First Steps intervention. First Steps has been a huge benefit to our family!

Thank you for all your help.

Our family's participation in the program has been a very short period of time to answer some of these questions fairly. I can tell you I love my therapists. They seem to be quite knowledgeable and handle my child very well.

My daughter has made so many improvements since receiving instruction from her First Steps therapists. I had no previous experience in dealing with a special needs child, and they have helped our family out tremendously by helping us learn how to better relate with our daughter. Our service coordinator has also been extremely helpful in meeting our needs. We have three therapists coming to our home each week. It is easy to see how much they care about our daughter's improvement and she has come to a point where she responds to them really well. I would like to extend my sincere thanks to everyone who makes this program possible.

Our therapist is awesome! She works very hard with my daughter. She deserves to be recognized.

Note: Comments are typed as written on the surveys with the exception of the correction of most misspellings. Names and other personally identifiable information of children, families and providers have been redacted.

Even though my husband and I are highly educated, intelligent people, we could not smoothly get through our two daughter's first years in America without the First Steps program. The therapy received by our two-year-old daughter's enable them to overcome the lack of contact, stimulation, and nurturing during their early lives in a Chinese orphanage. Our first daughter appeared to be a healthy ten month old when we brought her home. By the time she was eighteen months old, we knew there were problems with her ability to chew and swallow properly. Her speech was non-existent. She has come a long way since then. Although she still has difficulty with some sounds and cannot say multi-syllabic words, her speech has improved to the point where we can understand her attempts at communication. Our newest daughter, has spent the past two years in an institution. She is significantly behind in gross and fine motor skills, cognitive skills, speech, and social skills. She also suffers from Reactive Attachment Disorder and Sensory Integration Disorder. The therapists who conducted her evaluations understood the complexity of her needs and were able to make suggestions for activities that we could do at home to help ease her adjustment. She is also hearing impaired, but not completely deaf, so she has acquired the foundation of language. Because English is not her first language, we are working with her to learn sign language as she develops her basic language skills again. Each therapist seems to understand how all of her issues work against each other and they have developed plans which will overlap areas reinforcing her ability to learn and develop new skills. We strongly support the Missouri First Steps program, as do the other seven registered voters in our immediate family, which include eleven registered voters in our cul-de-sac, and numerous registered voters in our on-line support groups. We understand Governor Blunt's need to balance his budget, but discourage him from using our children as a means to an end. Our State leaders were elected to serve as our representatives. If they do not hear the voice of families and friends of Missouri's special needs children, we will elect leaders in the future who will.

First Steps has been a very positive experience for me and my son. With First Steps, I never felt alone or afraid to take care of a preemie baby. Thanks.

We are concerned about the co pays with the new changes. When will the sliding scale be released so that we can better budget? Money is tight, let alone adding a new bill. Thanks.

Our service coordinator is awesome and gets whatever we need.

First Steps is a wonderful program.

We had First Steps when we first adopted our son.

Everyone has been so helpful! What a great service.

I wish I had been told about the program sooner. I found out by accident through a friend. My pediatrician or Parents As Teachers educator never mentioned it.

We have participated in only three sessions so far.

I was deeply displeased that an occupational therapist used my daughter's name for several months as a part of her scam to bilk First Steps out of money. I reported her actions, and learned later that she used other families besides mine in the same manner.

Our therapists are all excellent and I would recommend them to anyone I know who has a child with special needs. Our service coordinator has been very nice to our family too. We don't know what we would have done without First Steps. I'm so glad funding was reinstated.

We are foster parents. We have used First Steps for three or four of our babies. These babies were drug addicted to cocaine mostly, and meth. One child was terribly in need of occupational therapy and it helped greatly. I can't sing the praises of First Steps enough. I feel that one child would be struggling today if he hadn't been trying when he did. He was adopted by a family in Georgia and is doing great now. We had a baby leave us in January 2005 badly in need of occupational therapy. He had First Steps too. Governor Blunt has no idea what he has done to these children.

I feel it is very important to catch a special need early. My daughter is receiving speech help. I can see progress every week. It is nice to have the speech therapist come into my home. She is also teaching me things that I can be doing during the week. It has been a true blessing. I also have a son in school and his speech/language wasn't caught until first grade and he has struggled. I hope this helps! God bless.

The idea or proposition to eliminate this program is preposterous! I am a parent of a one-year-old with Down's Syndrome, as well as a speech/language pathologist who serves children with special needs. This program is crucial to children with special needs and their families. Without all of the services my daughter receives (physical, occupational, speech, and cognitive therapy), she would be even further behind in all areas of development. I would also like to address the misconception of insurance coverage for these services. In the case of working families like my own who do not qualify for such assistance as Medicaid, this program provides services to children that many insurances do not cover. I have written many letters to the legislation about these issues and I urge you to continue this program for children like my daughter who rely on these services to reach their full potential and to function more closely to their peers.

Invaluable experience for her and help for me as her mom.

In question 20, when I answered, "I Do Not Know," it is because I'm not sure that First Steps affected these areas or my child would have progressed as quickly/in the same way without First Steps. I appreciate the concern and understanding that early intervention can greatly improve my child's potential once he reaches school age.

The only way we learned about First Steps was by going to Children's Mercy Hospital for an evaluation. This was rather costly for us and we're still unsure if this is the only way to discover this wonderful program. First Steps is such a beneficial program and is much needed. It made it possible for my child to get the help that we can't afford due to our insurance. Thank you.

I feel that my child would not be as developed as he is without the early intervention he has received. I probably would still be wondering what I'm supposed to do as a parent. First Steps has been a godsend. First Steps has given me knowledge, direction, and confidence. Thank you.

My child has moderate hearing loss. I feel that my child doesn't need to be visited every week. Bi-weekly would be okay.

We haven't had First Steps long enough to answer some of these questions.

This was a wonderful service we participated in. Our daughter was behind in walking and this service actually helped her take her "first steps!" She runs around now, and she will never know that she was delayed last year. Thank you!

My service coordinator has been a blessing to my family. She calls and checks on how things are going with my child's therapy. She is very helpful and she makes sure my child gets the services that is needed. My child is doing so much better since we have been involved in First Steps.

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I feel that without the intervention and assistance of First Steps my child would have suffered greatly in school. I also feel that, because of the First Steps program, I am better able to work with my child and communicate. I can understand more of what her needs and wants are. If it were not for the First Steps program, I would still be wondering what my child wanted and needed and would feel as if I was lost. First Steps has provided a line of communication for me and my daughter that I could not put a price tag on. The other thing about the First Steps program is that it was free to my family. If that had not been the case, we would have been unable to utilize the program, and therefore, I would still be unable to communicate with my daughter. Thanks so much for all that you have done to improve our family life! Thank you again.

This is a wonderful program that has given us the tools and understanding to allow our child to reach his potential. He is making outstanding progress each week due to the program. Without it, I'm sure that he would be no where near where he is today. We really appreciate it.

My developmental therapist has changed appointments several times, so we have only seen her once instead of twice. Other than that, it is a great program.

This program is an invaluable tool to our family!

Please don't change anything. First Steps is just fine.

I am very pleased with my service coordinator and our therapist. Thanks.

A very helpful program that I feel should continue to be available to families in the future.

The program helped me to get over the fears we had on having a premature baby.

We are so thankful for First Steps. Without it, we would be unable to recognize and properly address our child's needs. It's also likely that without First Steps we would have had to wait until our child was three years old to receive help, which would come from our public school district. This way, our child is much more likely to get caught up, experience success, and hopefully, be at the same level of development by the time he reaches kindergarten. Thank you First Steps.

This program has made a huge difference in my son! With early intervention he can eat normally now and verbally communicate. We were able to avoid a feeding tube! Please allow the program to continue. Not only will early intervention help children, but save school districts money in the long run.

I love the fact that you have this program. It's wonderful. Thank you guys a lot.

Being involved with the First Steps program has been a wonderful experience. First Steps and my service coordinator have been more like my "Dream Team," because they helped me so much with my family and meeting my child's needs. I never felt so much sincerity since I became involved in the program in January 2005. Please let the Governor know that some parents choose to do the best that they can for their children, but life seems to throw a curve ball into family plans regarding their children. I am one of those families who appreciates the services. I consider myself to be pretty sufficient and will use any social services as a last resort mainly due to the "label" it brings. But, I will be forever grateful for the angels that came into my life to help me and my family with a child that is sent from God.

I appreciate the work of First Steps. It has done an amazing job in helping my son.

First Steps has been a vital component of my son's development. All First Steps professionals have been incredible.

First Steps has been invaluable.

Being a new foster parent has been challenging and confusing at times. Our First Steps coordinator and therapists have been instrumental in helping us deal with special needs babies. Thank you. I am truly devastated that Governor Blunt is cutting this program.

Our therapist was great! She was timely for sessions and she really took an interest in my son's well-being. She has helped him more than she probably knows. She is very good at what she does.

To Whom It May Concern:

My husband, my daughter, and I have adopted our physical therapist into our family. She is great with our daughter and we couldn't ask for anyone better. I wouldn't change having her here for anything.

The therapist that has been working with our son has explored different options for dealing with his Brachial Plexus Injury. She came up with different exercises than his normal therapist at Children's Mercy Hospital. She has brought him further along than he would have been if we only went through CMH.

The First Steps program has been so helpful to my daughter and our family. I don't know what our family would have done without the First Steps program. I also have to add that I feel our service coordinator is the very best! She has been wonderful!

I think this is an absolutely wonderful program and the attack it has been under has been malicious, unjustified and heartless. I do feel that some families, mine included, could probably afford a small co pay if needed but this is one state/federal program that really benefits people and to take it away would be an assault on the most innocent and vulnerable of our citizens. I hope the good Governor's newborn does not ever need such services in the future. If he does, perhaps then he might be able to identify with what parents feel. Of course, he can afford all the services his child might need, but not all families are so fortunate. I'm sure money could be saved elsewhere, perhaps on the corporate Welfare front. Thanks for the wonderful program!

I have had five children go through the First Steps program. The early intervention services provided to my children has been invaluable to their well-being and that of our family.

Since my initial meeting with my service coordinator, I have not had another meeting and I have only talked to her once on the phone. I have called a couple of times but never received a call back from her. Overall, I have been less than pleased with her services. Also, I know that my physical therapist has been trying to get a hold of her also and has been unsuccessful. All other services and help received has been greatly appreciated and very helpful for my son. I cannot imagine where my son would be developmentally if it was not for the services we receive through this program. Thank you very much for all the help.

We could not have asked for more than you provided. Thanks.

The First Steps program is critical to the development of my child's gross motor skills. It remains imperative that my son continue to receive services from this program. My son has Down's Syndrome and will continue to need services for many years to come. I am incredibly grateful for this program and would be devastated if something happened and the program was gone. I could not afford services, and even with insurance, would not be able to get the amount of therapy my son needs. My service coordinator is wonderful but can only work with what's available to her. So, I will say that we are having a difficult time finding an occupational therapist to work with my son. I will also say that we have lost a fantastic physical therapist due to all the changes, or perceived changes, by Governor Blunt to the program and her entire company has opted to stop servicing all their First Steps children. I am very frustrated at the proposition of losing the First Steps services and the impact it would leave on my family.

First Steps is an amazing program. Not only do therapists come in the home and work with disabled children, they teach the parents and siblings how to bring all of the child's potential out. I truly believe the program saves money in the long run because it expands the child's capabilities so early when the young brain is developing. Please keep this program for these very special kids.

I was told to contact my service coordinator when I had questions, but I didn't know what services I needed to ask for. I expected to have more contact from my service coordinator and have been greatly disappointed in the First Steps program. I thought that there would be more support from First Steps and I feel as though my child's disability is not being addressed in this county due to a lack of education and information available to this county's First Steps program.

Absolutely the best. No exaggeration!

It was very difficult to find a speech therapist for my son when his original therapist left First Steps. I found the matrix to be outdated as far as who has availability. My son was without a therapist for over a month before a new therapist was found.

Since being in First Steps, my child's behavior and speech has changed for the better. Our therapists are very supportive of what I do as a parent and are patient with my child on days that he does not feel like participating. They continue to work through the tantrums until he settles down and plays. Thank you.

Please continue this program and look for ways to extend the program up to kindergarten age children.

We rely on the First Steps program to keep our daughter on track in her progress. The therapists come up with ideas to ensure my daughter's physical progress. We appreciate having access to this service which doesn't have to be processed through our health insurance. Our insurance has covered many other costs related to our daughter's genetic condition.

The First Steps program has been wonderful for our child and family. All therapists we have had have been wonderful and caring people. When we first moved to Missouri, First Steps was a wonderful resource, however, in the past few months availability of therapists has been a disappointment. We now travel to another county weekly for services.

We are so thankful for First Steps. However, our area (Northern Missouri) needs to provide incentives for physical, occupational, and speech therapists to stay in the area instead of working in private businesses or hospitals. Currently, my daughter isn't receiving therapy through First Steps because there are no therapists, but she is receiving therapy through Medicaid.

My son was born 12 weeks early and weighed one pound and five ounces. He was on a ventilator for over four months, in the NICU for more than six months, and required oxygen 24/7 until he was fifteen months old. He has a significant oral aversion, but with the assistance of speech and occupational therapists, he is now eating some food items in addition to his formula. His occupational and physical therapists worked very hard to teach him to walk (at 26 months), but it would have been a longer and harder road if we had not had all their knowledge and help.

Unfortunately, First Steps was unable to provide therapy services.

The progress our son has made in one year with the help of First Steps providers is truly amazing! He is unrecognizable! He has made huge strides on his physical development, strength and language. We believe this is possible not by First Steps providers working separate, but working and communicating well as a "team" approach. Thank you.

Not much help with resources or transition.

Without the First Steps program I don't know where we would be. They have really helped our family pull together to make our son the best he can be.

First Steps has helped my child in all means possible. We had a great service coordinator and we got along with all of our therapists. We received all supplies that my child needed. Thank you for all of your help.

When asking for a survey, postage should be paid.

What an unbelievable program! Our daughter was diagnosed with Autism before she turned two. With occupational, speech, and ABA over the first year and a half, she has made huge progress. She is a different little girl. Her eye contact, playing with others, speech progress, adaptive skills, have improved. We are forever thankful for this program. Early intervention was key. Thank you.

I am very grateful to have the opportunity to utilize this program to benefit my child. At a time when I was confused and unsure of what to do, I was given hope. I was, and am, fortunate to have wonderful therapists for my child. They help me understand what my child is going through and the things I need to do to keep up his progress. Hats off to the hard work of speech therapists. They have truly impacted our lives. As far as our service coordinator, I have not been so lucky. Since the recent merger of the intake coordinators of this program I feel that I fell through the cracks and have not been followed up on. I do not get a response from phone calls, neither does my therapists or Parents As Teachers therapist. It is frustrating and uncalled for. If it wasn't for having to deal with a service coordinator, I would say the service is sensational. I am lucky to have this opportunity for my child. Thank you to whom it concerns.

I just hope Missouri continues to fund the wonderful First Steps program.

To Whom It May Concern: I recently received a survey and felt I could not properly fill it out without explanation. My daughter has Down's Syndrome and is nineteen months old. She has been with First Steps since her first month and everyone and everything in the program was professional and encouraging, as a mother with a special needs child would need. Now, however, the program has been cut to the point of having no available therapists. Because of these cuts, my coordinator calls to apologize because there is nothing available. She continues to try her best to fulfill ours and, I'm sure other's, needs, but, without therapists, she is in quite a bind. Please find ways to provide for this First Steps program. It is needed not only for my family but others in the program. Thank you.

I like receiving monthly statements regarding services but have noticed errors. When I have called regarding those issues, I am referred to another number or person. I barely have time to call one number much less others to remedy the situation. I feel First Steps has been very beneficial for our family. I am concerned about the family co pay when we often have unexpected expenses that arise with our son's medical diagnosis. It just concerns me as to how they will determine the co pay for each family. I am concerned that it will be used on income alone. Everyone's situation is different. For example, a family that makes \$60,000 and has a child with a speech and language delay and no other medical issues may be able to afford a co pay with no problem. Another family with a \$60,000 income and has a child with a medical diagnosis and other issues and sees many doctors may not be able to afford the co pay. How will they determine the co pay so that it looks at income as well as expenditures for medical necessities?

Without the First Steps program, we would not even know where to begin working with our child's differences. The coordinators and providers in First Steps have been truly wonderful. We are so fortunate to have this low-cost resource available to us, as the services or even co pays would be cost prohibitive without it.

I can't imagine what would happen to our child without First Steps. Our insurance doesn't cover long-term rehabilitation and we could never afford rehabilitation with the little my husband makes. I'm amazed at the improvements we've seen due to the child's rehabilitation, especially in recent months. I know the therapists truly care for our child too.

First Steps was excellent in providing services to our daughter. After evaluating our son and writing an IFSP we never heard from anyone again concerning his needs. Subsequently, we moved to Kansas and started the process over again. First Steps helped make the transition easier. They totally dropped the ball in regards to our son.

I pray the Governor doesn't take away the help for our special needs kids. Thanks.

First Steps should be made more aware. What I mean by this is that I had never heard of the program until my real estate agent told me about it. In small towns the doctors and therapists need to be made more aware of this program. I have done what I can in my small town to get the word out about the program.

My child's therapist for speech and occupational therapy are wonderful. First Steps has been a blessing for my son as has his ability to talk and communicate with everyone he comes in contact with. His therapist is wonderful and always works around our schedule with work and other family activities. Thanks First Steps for everything.

Thank you for early intervention as our insurance would not pay for such services.

This program has been critical to the development of my son to address language/speech delays. First Steps has allowed my son an opportunity to communicate with others. Thank you.

We had another in the First Steps program. This has really made life better for our child. She loves school and is happy to learn.

The program has benefited our son and we are fortunate to have him in this program.

My only complaint is that, at first, the coordinator told us that First Steps would cover my child's braces/orthodontics, but then the service coordinator made it awkward to ask for it to be fully covered. She said that if we "really needed it" it could be covered. I don't mind at all paying a portion of the costs, I just want to know up front and not be told one thing while something different is actually done.

I am so thankful for this program. It has significantly helped my son's speech. Thank you so much!

First Steps has been such a blessing. My son has made such tremendous progress. The therapists who work with him are very knowledgeable and supportive. The service coordinator, however, has not been involved and the six month review was held several months late and only occurred because the therapists and I worked together to get it in place.

It was very helpful. Our daughter needed all the services the first six months. After that, they only continued with speech therapy at two hours a week. Everything was very helpful. Every one of the therapists are absolutely terrific. Our therapists are terrific and do a great job! I like First Steps for its beneficial services, flexible schedule, and great therapists. They do an overall great job. I think that if we lose this program, it will hurt a lot of children that really need it. I was very pleased how professional everyone was when I needed to reschedule. They were very nice about working with a working mom that has a lot of other things going on. I was very happy with the program. Let's keep it the way it is. I will definitely recommend it to people who truly need the services.

First Steps has been a wonderful resource for our son. Thank you for providing this because it has really helped him. I hope First Steps continues in Missouri and that all children with disabilities can benefit!

We chose our speech therapist and she is wonderful. Our daughter has excelled. We have found some challenges/restrictions with your "new" policy of having sessions in a "natural" environment. I have no problem with driving my son and participating with him in his sessions so that we can continue practice/homework at home. Our therapist specializes in cleft and understands fully the challenges our son encounters. Also, she has a great network of support through her team. She does not travel, which goes against your new policy, and will limit children with cleft from receiving excellent, probably the best, speech therapists in this area of disability. I see this as a discrimination against the child and ask you to revisit your policy.

First Steps has greatly improved our child's fine and gross motor skills, and the therapists have trained me to address her physical/sensory/behavioral needs throughout each day. First Steps has greatly impacted our child's development and the ability of our family to handle her special needs. Thank you to our First Steps therapists.

Although we had a very lengthy process to get into the System Point of Entry, we have really felt blessed to be able to work with such highly capable and knowledgeable professionals. Our service coordinator, speech pathologist, and occupational therapist, are all dedicated to seeing our son become more successful in his ability to communicate at the age appropriate level that he has slowly been approaching. Thank you so much for allowing us to benefit by utilizing this program.

We entered First Steps prior to the reorganization in 2003. Our intake was not satisfactory, but our services were outstanding. The physical, occupational, and speech therapists and the nutritionist are extremely knowledgeable, helpful, positive, and professional. We had a change in service coordinators due to reorganization, at which time our files were lost. The second coordinator did not meet our needs and we just recently switched again. We anticipate much success now. Our daughter is thriving and we feel strongly that First Steps has played an invaluable role in her growth and our strengths as a family. We are glad that Missouri realized the value of this program and continued financing it. We thank our supportive providers for continuing their work with such remarkable dedication, even though their own futures were unstable. Thank you for the opportunity to express our views.

I felt the First Steps program was not initially explained properly to me and this may be in part due to the fact that I did not have one continuous service coordinator, but several, which did not make communication easy. Also, the coordinators did not always know information I wanted and would not get back to me on time. In fact, I have waited two weeks for a reply in spite of regular telephone messages being left. We also had a total of two speech therapists and four occupational therapists which compromised continued care for my child, as each therapist then had to relearn my child and all aspects of my child's needs that were to be addressed. The three therapists that my son does see (speech, developmental, and occupational) have been truly excellent in the therapy and educational experience they have provided for my son and I. I will recommend them to any parent. I feel it was the administrative section of First Steps that was severely lacking in contact and I feel inadequate. Transition did not run smoothly mostly, in part, due to not being adequately informed of procedures and the "next step."

This program is the best once you are in. We had trouble getting evaluated. It took five months before we were ever seen. They told us they lost our paperwork.

There is no doubt in my mind that our daughter would not be as far along as she is had it not been for First Steps. Our occupational and physical therapists provide services and advice that is indispensable. It was with much happiness that First Steps received the necessary funding to continue helping not only our daughter but other Missouri children who needed developmental assistance.

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First Steps is a great program. My daughter had a speech delay and now, after completing the program, she talks like a normal three-year-old. We had a great speech therapist and were given many props to help our daughter excel.

It was always difficult to talk to our service coordinator. We would have to leave two or three messages and wait weeks for a return phone call. In one year we had four different service coordinators.

Thank you! There is no way we could have afforded to get the proper physical therapy for our sons without First Steps. They are almost performing at actual age thanks to your services. We love First Steps! Sincerely, with gratitude.

I absolutely LOVE First Steps. Everyone who has worked with my child has been kind, caring, and accommodating. My service coordinator is excellent. She strives to meet my child's needs and has been a huge help whenever I have had concerns. Thank you First Steps! I don't know where we would be without you!

Very good program.

I feel First Steps has been an integral part of my child's development. The therapists (physical, occupational, and developmental), have all been very professional, thorough, and informative. All my services have, to this point, been excellent, timely, and goal-oriented. I received reading material and suggestions for toys that will assist in my child's development. At this point, most of my concerns have been addressed gross-motor wise. I am still in need of services at this time to work with my son on speech and language development. In the near future, he will need to be evaluated for learning disabilities. Thanks for all the great help First Steps has provided to this point. I'm sure without First Steps none of this could have been possible.

We are so grateful for First Steps.

Our service coordinator did help in the beginning to get everything up and going. Our son's therapist is wonderful. She is very knowledgeable in the services that our son receives. She has helped us in many ways to keep our son's progression right on track and even ahead of schedule in most of the areas that we are working on.

First Steps has been an incredible help to my daughter. In the last two months she has blossomed in her speech, language, and sensory skills. Our speech/language and occupational therapists are greatly loved by my daughter and she responds very positively to their instructions. A few months ago, I was very worried my daughter would have a disastrous future, but now I feel optimistic that she will do well. She is so much happier now that she can finally communicate and she seems to have greatly matured. Our family could not be happier with the First Steps program and feel that it has greatly helped our navigation into speech and sensory difficulties.

This program is essential for ensuring development of young children and enabling parents to succeed at raising children with special needs. We must give parents and children the tools at an early age for dealing with these issues.

My team is outstanding! They have been an amazing source of help to me and to my family. I could not have done as well for my daughter without them.

My child has a speech delay that had him so frustrated he would bang his head on the wall or throw himself down. By 18 months we were lucky if he was saying five words. Even though it took almost four and half months to have my son evaluated we did receive compensatory care which was a benefit. Now, after six months of speech therapy, he is able to communicate his wants and needs more easily. We, as parents, have also learned numerous ways to help our child make progress while the speech therapist is not here. First Steps has been wonderful for my son and my family.

Our service coordinator has been a huge support to our family. She has listened when I needed to talk or to just have someone to lean on. She understands what it is like to have a hearing impaired child and knows that the parents have to be empowered by their knowledge in order to fight for their child's needs. Our son has PDD as well, so our situation is a little more complex. She has helped us get the support we need through the Judevine Center for Autism and ABA therapy. First Steps is allowing us to provide a strong foundation of learning and interventions for our son. We are extremely grateful. Thank you.

I would prefer center-based learning and therapy over home-based because it would provide social interaction with peers, eliminate distractions, provide a learning environment which would be associated with listening, participating and learning and spare the inconvenience of a constant flow of people in and out of our home. Unfortunately, Governor Blunt feels the "budget" is more important than providing our children the start they need to facilitate development. What could possibly be more important than our children?

With the help of First Steps, my husband and I have seen our son make progress in all areas. Our son qualified for communication delays. He is now communicating much more and is doing more purposeful play. He is less sensitive to touch. He still has a long way to go, but I shudder to think where he'd be developmentally without First Steps.

St. Josephs is amazing. I am very happy.

Need services in outlying counties and/or more workers.

All my child's therapists have been very dedicated to work toward reaching his goals.

They are wonderful! Thank you.

Thank you for this program. It is invaluable.

We are so thankful for First Steps. Our coordinator is wonderful and our therapists are first rate. We had to change physical therapists, and our second one is much better for our son. We are so pleased and grateful for the difference this has made in our child's life. He is happy, playful, and so much more confident. Thank you.

What a wonderful program! I feel so lucky to have received these services for our son. Speech was a major issue. He does great now!

Our service coordinator has been with us during all of our time in First Steps. She is outstanding and always met all our needs above and beyond what we would need or ask. All of our therapists were very good and very reliable! We have greatly benefited from this program and we believe eventually our child will need no intervention or therapy services in large part due to this early intervention! Thank you.

My daughter wouldn't be where she is without First Steps. Thank you.

We believe this program to be essential for families of children with special needs, even those with delays in only one area. It has helped put our son on the right track for entering his preschool years.

Governor Blunt is a fool to cut funds for this program.

Other than the physicians who have taken care of my son's needs, First Steps has been the most valuable part of his care. First Steps provided us with resources and a plan for this therapy services. First Steps was the one and only resource that was efficient, informative, and has remained a constant source of support for my son and our family. I cannot imagine what we would have done without this immediate intervention after my son's birth. Thank you for providing this incredible resource for families and especially for the children with special circumstances and needs!

Our son had First Steps from the fall of 2001 until the spring of 2003 and our daughter is in First Steps now. Our daughter has a lot of sensory integration needs. Without the skilled level of education and training of the speech, occupational and developmental therapists, our daughter's outcome would never have been what it is. Skilled therapists are the key as well as regular visits to continue to assess, adapt and monitor our daughter's evolving needs. First Steps, in the short term with our children, saved the state more money in the long run. First Steps, as it currently is, is great. She is targeted to be done this summer with only eight months of therapy due to early intervention.

My child is doing so well in the program that he probably won't need services by the time he is three. If we would have waited until this service was not available, his delays would have worsened and he probably would have struggled into his elementary years. Early intervention is the key.

Communication between First Steps and the school districts needs to be improved on both sides.

The ABA services or a behavioral assessment were not offered by the service coordinator. I had to raise the issue after independent research.

I don't know what we would do without First Steps.

What an awesome program! Thank you.

Great program! Keep up the good work.

I sincerely hope this program will continue to benefit children for years to come. The last thing families need in situations such as ours is more road blocks to obtaining services for their needy children.

First Steps is a wonderful service. Having a special needs sister without intervention and a daughter with special needs, the two can't be compared. The difference is great!

First Steps is a great program! Keep up the good work.

We have been extremely satisfied with the First Steps program. My wife and I are professionals in the mental health field and we see a huge need for this program in our community. We hope the Governor will continue this program, but also make it free to all participants who have special needs children. We feel that children in our community greatly need these services.

I am very happy with the occupational therapy my son receives. I am not happy with our physical therapist and especially my service coordinator. We are supposed to receive a speech evaluation and a nutritionist, which I have never seen or heard from. I have had an extremely hard time reaching my service coordinator and getting her to do anything.

The program continues to want therapists my child does not need. This tends to be frustrating when I have to continually say no and explain why I don't want that therapy.

Thank you for all you have done and continue to do. The program is wonderful and it would be a devastation if the Governor were to make changes to the system.

Our daughter was born three months prematurely. She has no long-term effects. As of now, we have First Steps just in case she might need help along the way. Our service coordinator checks in a lot and answers all of my questions. That's why I picked, "Does Not Apply," on question 20. Thank you.

Everyone we have worked with through the First Steps program has been so nice and helpful and always willing to work with me and my child's schedule. It is such a wonderful program.

Since beginning in the First Steps program, I have seen significant improvements in my child's speech. I was also made aware of some weaknesses he had in fine motor skills. I had no idea and this might have been a problem in the future. Those issues were addressed and he has improved significantly. My family and I know how to keep working with him so that he doesn't lose what he learned once First Steps ends next month when he turns three. He has qualified for speech services through the school system. We are so grateful that the First Steps program has helped us get help for our child at an early stage. We hope that his speech and occupational concerns will be resolved by the time he starts school. Although your program helped us a lot, I do have one issue to bring to your attention. My child changed speech pathologist's three times and had a change in who his occupational therapist was during his year of receiving services. Even though we have seen improvement in our child, I can't help but wonder if he would have done even better if he had received services from the same therapists during the past year. All of the therapists left their positions with First Steps to work for a school district. With all of the changes to the program (spurred by Governor Blunt) you may want to consider ways to keep your therapists so that the children you serve may be benefited even more. Thank you for your help with early intervention. Overall, the First Steps program has been wonderful

The outlook for our son, based on his medical condition, was very poor. He is doing unbelievably well to the point that, if you were unaware of his issues, you would think he was a typical child. We are, and will be, eternally grateful this program is available for our son.

I, as a parent, have come a long way using all of my resources and talking with the therapist for my daughter. I would recommend them to other parents and their children. I really enjoyed working with my last service coordinator. She has been wonderful with support and helping me find my next speech therapist. I would recommend that the program screen more speech therapists or give more observation on their professional training before hiring them. Thank you for your help with my daughter and our family. I believe 100% in this program and hope it will survive. I will recommend to all my friends and family if needed.

Please do not take this program away. It helps many families who have children with a disability. I have seen huge strides in my son and feel he is finally doing what he is supposed to be doing for his age. First Steps is a great program and all of the ladies that we have met have been wonderful. Their dedication to helping children is outstanding. Next time you want a survey returned, please provide a stamp.

First Steps allowed my daughter to increase her fine and gross motor skills to the point that she may not have to receive ECSE in those two areas!

We are very thankful for the First Steps program. It has helped our child and family very much and we hope the program continues.

My son's IFSP lists fifteen hours a week of ABA program. He gets two hours because for three and half months we have not been able to get implementers through the hire process. I feel frustrated about this because we've been made to feel like it's our responsibility as the parents to find and hire implementers and our fault that we can't get anyone through the training and background check before they find another job where they get paid sooner.

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We feel very fortunate to have and be in the First Steps program. There are a few areas in which our daughter is progressing extremely well and, without First Steps, she would not be as far as she is. Also, our daughter is involved in speech and physical therapy which would not be covered by our insurance company and we could not afford it on our own. She wears splints on her feet which also would not be covered by our health insurance. So we are very appreciative and thankful for the services First Steps offers. We could not do it by ourselves. Thank you!

I am not always made aware of all the types of therapy and equipment available to my child unless I ask about it. It was almost as though the rule is "if you dig hard enough you can find services to benefit your child, otherwise you're out of luck." The program is awesome! However, it seems as though there are constant changes or threats of changes that no one really knows about. Almost all service providers we have encountered are dedicated and hard working. The alternative therapy (pool, etc.) have been extremely beneficial to my child's development and improvement. Setting up IFSP and coordinating all service providers is very frustrating. There should be some incentive to get them to meetings.

The First Steps program has been extremely helpful and encouraging to us as a family. We think First Steps has really helped us to make our son the best he can be.

Thank God for your program. It has changed our lives and brightened my son's future. I have outstanding therapists! They're people of extreme determination and passion for the children they work with. Also, the program, Floor Time, is amazing! I know it's a lot of hours but, I credit it for the amazing progress my son has made! Thank you! May God bless you.

My individual service coordinator did not do very much in terms of contacting us. We had our initial visit and one or two calls during the first six months and then our final six months IFSP as we were moving. I personally don't understand what she was getting paid for on a month to month basis. Our speech therapist was great and very understanding and personable. She worked great with my child and really understood our needs. After reading through the survey again, my initial contacts with the lady who helps you find your service coordinator was also great and she was very informed about the whole First Steps program. We were also part of the Parents As Teachers program, which we fully support.

My son's being seen by a speech therapist. He had maybe 20 words when he started in November. He now, as of May, speaks well over 200 words. He is less frustrated and much happier.

My only concern is the shortage of physical therapists. We pay out of pocket for a private physician. First Steps is wonderful. I don't know what we would do without it. Our daughter's entire future is brighter because of this program. She has Down's Syndrome.

This program has been vital to our child's life, future, and well-being. Even though both my husband and I work in the medical field, neither of us knew when or where to start preparing our son for school and life in general. I pray that Missouri keeps the program. If two parents, who both have medical and educational backgrounds have no idea of what questions to ask or where to find the information, what will happen to the children whose parents are not educated at all.

I have disagreed to most of these due to the fact that the developmental therapist I have had in my home has been less than adequate.

First Steps is a lifesaver! I don't know where we would have turned if I didn't have therapists to consult with about our daughter. Please don't cut this program.

My child came home with a trach, g-button, oxygen and not much hope for the future. First Steps has helped my husband and I learn how to be proactive with our child to help her develop as normally as possible. Our coordinator is great about getting equipment, new therapists, when necessary, and increasing or decreasing various services, as needed. The many therapists that have worked with my daughter have helped us progress tremendously. My daughter came home after eight months of hospitalization. At eight months she could barely lift her head. During therapy we have worked with her to sit, crawl, walk, talk and progress from the trach valve to being capped and learning to eat and drink. Through First Steps, we are quickly progressing to writing and other important skills. One of our therapists discovered that she was having vision problems, which explained many delays. After getting glasses, our daughter progressed again. As a mother overwhelmed with a child with serious health problems, I could not have stayed positive and known how to work with my daughter without First Steps. The success of the program has much to do with parental involvement in therapy! We are truly grateful for our therapists and coordinators.

Thank you so much.

Our family really appreciates what First Steps has done for us and our child. It has been a pleasure to have them in the home working with our child in a very relaxed, yet professional manner. Thanks so much!

During my experience as a parent with a special needs child in this program, I believe the following can be improved: Gaining needed medical equipment and supplies. The wait for items through the First Steps program was three to four months for two items and six months for the third item. I truly believe that some type of system to loan items to families (previously purchased by First Steps) would shorten the wait and get necessary equipment to the child faster. Of course, this will not work for every child, but it can help save the program money and get the necessary items to the children faster. (Please consider this for future use). Please educate the therapists on how to successfully gain needed equipment. Possibly involve the service coordinator in monthly contact with family, (i.e., monthly contact should not include receiving reports from therapists. Does each report get read by the service coordinator? (It needs to be a face to face or phone contact). Speech and occupational therapy are very difficult to get in the Cape Girardeau area. Please look into increasing incentives to pull in more and better therapists to work in the home, (i.e., reimburse mileage to the therapists). I was told several times that certain therapists would not come to my house to work with my child because of the distance traveled and the 20-30 minutes it took to drive to my residence. I was also told that one therapist could see two or three kids in the time it took to work with my child. This therapist was unable to work with me due to potential earning power. How do you think this made me feel? How would this make you feel as a parent? I was told several times that the therapists were told of the IFSP meetings. After getting to know the therapists I discovered that none of the therapists were emailed as the service coordinator told me that they were. Why were the therapists not emailed and how do you think this made me feel? Also, when I was having problems with a service coordinator, I had no information on who to contact to voice my concerns. Eventually, my frustration levels escalated and the therapist in my home advocated me about other service coordinators. I am very thankful for the therapists in my home. They have all done an excellent job. I truly believe that the management and coordination areas need to be evaluated in Cape Girardeau area. Maybe things are not run properly in the Cape Girardeau area office which is my area of concern. Maybe other families can gain from the information presented. I know it is difficult to keep everyone happy, but some areas need improvement to help the families and children that the program was designed to help.

I do not know where our son would be without the services of a physical therapist. She developed a thirteen-month-old who could not transition from sitting to laying down into a three-year-old who runs. We are forever grateful for the services of First Steps.

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I truly believe that this is an outstanding program to assist families with special needs children. Our service coordinator has been a pleasure to work with and is truly committed in making a difference in people's lives. She is genuinely interested in the well-being of our child and to provide any services needed to address our concerns. Also, I would say that our life and our son's life has changed and improved as a direct result of his therapists (occupational and special instruction). The only issue we have encountered is his speech therapist. She is great but we don't think she is compatible with our son. However, we take full responsibility since we have not addressed this issue with our service coordinator as of yet. I was outraged that Governor Blunt was trying to eliminate this program since it is essential for the development and well-being of disabled children in this state. Without this program, my son would not have grown and become the little man he is today. It is a lifesaver. I would also commend our PED for letting us know about this program and encouraging us to call. There needs to be more public awareness, although we got some due to Blunt's actions, about the program along with letting parents know that these services do not label a child nor project a negative image on the parents. I feel that some parents, who have children with special needs, do not participate in this program because it reflects poorly on them in their social circle or they feel they are inadequate parents. Therefore, I think more public awareness should demonstrate that this is not the case. Indirectly, through the Missouri First Steps program, I have learned to become a better advocate for our son and from there this has made a difference in my life as I also stick up for myself. Thanks to all of you for the wonderful and caring job that you do each day to make a difference in a child's (and the families) lives!

Thanks to First Steps, my little boy started walking last week at two years and two months. Wonderful program. Without it, my little boy would not have been able to get the help he needed. We are so thankful for the program.

Would like more hours for certain disciplines, but I understand hands are tied thanks to Governor Blunt.

It has been a real blessing to us.

I have nothing bad to say about the First Steps program. The people involved with my family treat us with respect. I am very happy with our experiences with First Steps.

Regarding question four, it was not easy to find out about First Steps. The hospital told me my son would be developmentally delayed and that he would need to be tested. They were the ones who should have given me the information about First Steps. I found out about First Steps through Parents As Teachers. I enrolled my son in Parents As Teachers when he was three months old. His parent educator was who told us about First Steps. I am very thankful for Parents As Teachers and our first parent educator who was very concerned about several issues that my son had. She got us going with First Steps. I am thankful for First Steps because of the help and assistance I've gotten for my son. Regarding question 20a, my son only uses about a dozen or so words. We have just begun speech therapy but the pediatrician says he's tongue tied. He may need a procedure to fix that so he can talk. He understands what is said to him, he just can't express himself.

First Steps has greatly helped with my twin's development both mentally and physically. They have been a great blessing to us as a whole. I don't know what I would have done without them. Thank you.

We have enjoyed working with the occupational therapist. They have worked with our daughter and we hope to get her into Early Childhood to continue the lessons after she turns three in September.

My child was initially introduced into First Steps because of a speech delay. It then became a growing concern regarding my child's sensory integration. I cannot imagine not receiving intervention for my child. Our occupational and speech therapists and service coordinator have been an amazing team to work with. They have walked with us in helping our child's issues and have been superb in listening and offering suggestions to help our child. To our family this is a program that I cannot imagine not having. It is my hope that this program will always be around for future generations to come. Continue to fight for it!

When our son was born and we found out he had Down's Syndrome we were lost. The hospital gave us information regarding First Steps and they helped us get the ball rolling. At the time we were enrolled, First Steps was going through changes and we fell under the old system. A service coordinator was chosen for us that wasn't very sympathetic. That was rough, and after a few months, we made a change and our new service coordinator is great. Our therapists are excellent. They provide educational tips to my family so we can help our son. He's progressing nicely. The therapists provide weekly insight and help us realize that it's going to be okay. I don't know what we would have done without First Steps. It's a great program.

We have only been enrolled in First Steps for about three months. However, I feel that, so far, results are encouraging and our child has certainly improved his physical abilities. It is very reassuring that there is a program for children with special needs, as it gives parents like us vital support and expertise.

I know my son is doing much more than the doctor's ever thought he would, and I have the therapists and First Steps to thank for that. I was happy to meet with Governor Blunt when he came to Columbia, MO, and to show my support for the program by asking him not to cut the funding for this program that reaches out and helps so many. Thanks again for everything.

I would highly recommend First Steps to anyone considering using it. My son's speech has gone from none to almost a five-year-old level. I don't think that would have happened without First Steps.

The therapists that work with my child are fabulous! My child would be no where near where she is developmentally if we hadn't had them to help us.

I feel our service coordinator is very poor. She is not a good advocate and is hard to reach by phone. She makes the entire system difficult to accomplish anything. In addition, she is friends with the therapist who is not very good and I do not feel comfortable asking for a new therapist.

Our family is extremely grateful for the First Steps program. It has allowed us to receive the intensive early intervention that research has proven necessary for children with Autism. My service coordinator and providers have been excellent. My biggest complaints are the use of an outside source (i.e., "What the doctor ordered") when ordering equipment (huge hike in prices - waste of money) and some of the rude treatment of my providers by staff at CFO (not all staff, but on several occasions, with me as well). Thanks to First Steps, my son has made amazing progress this year! I do feel that it's important to focus on family. However, I feel that it is crucial not to diminish direct therapy. Parents want to be parents to their children. I want to play with and enjoy my son. Because he has Autism, he has to learn everything through a very direct, repetitive format. He must have direct teaching. I certainly hope that the push for "consult only" does not go through. Families want to supplement therapy and be good parents, but we don't want to be therapists. Thank you! We owe a lot to First Steps. There is no way that we could have afforded the intense services that my son needed without it!

This program is invaluable and has made a huge impact in the physical and speech development of our daughter.

I cannot express my gratitude for services First Steps has provided for my daughter with special needs. My private insurance would not pay for her therapy. Without the First Steps program, I can confidently say she would not have attained her milestones in the time that she did. Thank you so much for your services and support.

I truly believe the program is effective and important for the children as well as the parents. It has allowed me to understand and cope with everything by seeing my daughter progress.

The First Steps program has been so wonderful. We feel like they took us in and helped and cared for us in our time of need. Their services have been invaluable to our son. It is a service that is much needed. Our children are our nations best asset.

My physical, occupational, and speech therapists are the best. I would not trade them for anything.

We have recently requested a new case manager. We are hopeful that she will work better with our family. Couldn't do without First Steps.

Thank you.

We are very pleased with the First Steps program.

If not for First Steps, I don't know how much our son would be able to do today. Thanks First Steps!

I am involved in First Steps now, and also in 1997-99, beforethings changed. While some changes are positive others have made things more difficult. One thing I would really like to see addressed is equipment children have outgrown. Most equipment is in good shape and once the children are finished with it, there's no way to pass it on. Buying new equipment when families have perfectly good equipment sitting around is silly. There needs to be a way to recycle and reuse. We have a perfectly good stander that our child has outgrown. He is in need of a new one. It's silly that there is no place to donate our used one so it could be used by another child. It's also extremely silly that it is required to go through a vendor such as Best Buy when things could be ordered through the catalog or direct from the company at a fraction of the cost. Thousands of dollars could be saved. When my other son was involved in First Steps, if equipment was needed, our service coordinator could shop around for the best deal and order from the company. Sometimes we even found things at Wal-Mart we could make work. Again, if there was a place to store used equipment, think of the money that could be saved if it was used more than once by more than one child. I'm sure money could also be saved if we found a way to handle billing and paperwork within rather than going out of state and hiring a third party. Parents, service coordinators, and therapists should be involved in redesigning First Steps. They are the ones out there doing what needs to be done and who have firsthand knowledge of what works and what doesn't; much better than someone behind a desk deciding what looks good on paper. That's not always the best choice. We have been very thankful for everything First Steps has done for our family. That is why I'd like to see some changes made so that there is better use of money and equipment.

I had premature babies at 28 weeks but, only one qualified for your First Steps program. The information that we received was of help, but would have been more helpful for first time parents. There were a lot of common sense issues. For me, staying home with my kids and having the help of another person showing what would be expected at age appropriate times was most beneficial. The child that qualified is doing great and never had many issues in my opinion.

I think First Steps is a very needed and wonderful program. Without the help and information we have received, my child would not have gotten the help he needed. Thank you all for what you do!

The First Steps program has been incredibly helpful to my son and our family. Without a doubt, First Steps has promoted and advanced my child's progress. First Steps "early intervention" and care has boosted my child beyond any personal/family help we could have given him. Thank you so much for his care. You have a SUPER advocate in my son's physical therapist. She has been, and is, a fantastic physical therapist.

The First Steps program has been very beneficial to our family. The one recommendation that I have for the program relates to the therapist selection process. It is difficult as a parent to review resumes and conduct interviews for professionals of which I know nothing about. It would be helpful for parents to be given some guidance during the process in order to select a therapist that best fits their needs.

The two service providers have been such supporters in every decision we have made with our son's health and progress. They are such important pieces of our son's puzzle. I don't know what we would be doing without their support and help.

We cannot imagine raising our son, who has a visual impairment, withoutthe First Steps program and our service coordinator. Our son continues to make progress because of the providers we use. We appreciate all the hard work from everyone and will continue to support the program in any way possible. Thank you.

The survey does not allow for "no opinion." Also, no question addresses if services were even available. There is a great need for speech therapists! Our coordinator did a fine job, but no speech therapist was available. The coordinator could have searched a little harder for a therapist. The matrix is unreliable.

Currently, we are in between speech therapists. The first therapist had zero flexibility for scheduling sessions and she encouraged mid-afternoon appointments, which I had to wake my daughter for so there would be less distractions from my two other children. Also, when speaking to her on the phone, she would refer to my daughter as "he." She obviously couldn't picture my child and made references to my daughter in prior sessions that were inaccurate. For example, she would say something like, "Is she saying anything at all or is she quiet all the time?" When, in my previous appointment, I told her how my daughter exploded one weekend and said eight different words. I felt she was aggravated that my two other children (ages four and two) wanted to see what she was doing with my daughter. Needless to say, I am looking forward to a more positive experience with the second therapist. I got the impression from the first one that her caseload was too much. Thank you for your time.

Since beginning in the First Steps program, my son's language, social skills, and behavior have greatly improved. My service coordinator has been excellent in explaining what my options were and what she felt would be most beneficial for my son. Now that he is finished with the program, he has been evaluated and found to be pretty much on target developmentally and needs no further therapy at this time. My son's therapist was also my advocate and, I feel, that if I see my son regressing, I can go back to her for advice. I have affectionately referred to my team of speech and occupational therapists, service coordinator and Parents As Teachers as my son's "A Team Superheroes" who are looking out for him. I am a nurse in a NICU and have heard about First Steps at work but did not really know much about it. Now I rave about the program to families who have qualified and tell them how much it has helped my child. Great job to all. I'll never forget you!

It was very hard to learn about First Steps. Children's Hospital did not address the issue. I have to say that First Steps has helped our daughter in so many great ways. Thanks.

It took about eight weeks to get a return phone call to start the program. We were happy with the physical therapy services but thought the "bureaucracy" could be more efficient and in turn could save money.

Our son and I look forward to the arrival of his therapists. Absolutely, they have helped him immensely. He doesn't talk, but he understands a lot. He can't move a lot, but he tries. I appreciate the respect, time, caring, talking, sharing, and listening we receive. Each tiny improvement is monumental to us and keeps us going. Despite his condition and having pneumonia once, our son's health is generally excellent. We have an awesome coordinator. It feels great to know we don't have to beg for what he needs and what we want for him. Our coordinator keeps things comfortable and light feeling and is organized and efficient. We love all of our son's therapists. His blue feeder seat helps him tremendously. We hope to have a standing frame as soon as possible. Our physical therapist needs to look at what First Steps already has. It seems we're waiting a long time for his kid kart. We are trying to find fabric for our own bath frame that my husband built. I guess we'll have to sew something filled with special beads to keep our son's legs in instead of "froging out" when he's in bed. First Steps is fantastic. We can't imagine what we'd do without it. Wondering what Governor Blunt will do to the program is stressful. If you want more verbal or written contacts, I'll be happy to supply them. Thank you. Is it too late to send a letter to Governor Blunt? To what address?

I am still concerned about my child's delay in speech. I have been doing the same things with my child as the speech therapist does. I need more "technical" speech training (such as mouth exercises)?

I do not know what we would do without the First Steps program and the services provided for my son. We truly appreciate everyone involved in the program.

Our son is not in the "high need" group. Born at 28 weeks, he needed help early, but is now doing well. We received occupational and physical therapy earlier, but no longer receive services. Every few months we receive a call from our service coordinator, voice mail really. We don't need help, so never really talk. Then we received an Eligibility of Benefits, of sorts, in the mail indicating that she (the service coordinator) billed the program \$60.00 for a phone call! I understand I do not know the behind the scenes requirements of her job, but it occurs to me that this is probably why the program is in trouble. This sort of billing is wrong and, because of it, I no longer support or encourage the First Steps program. Mismanagement of funds is especially annoying to me when coming from tax revenue. Basically, my son is fine. Do I think the program helped us? No, not really. Was it nice to have the additional support? Yes, but I also think it was selfish of me to want the extra encouragement. I do not think my son would be any worse off if we had not been part of the program. Sorry, but that's the truth of our situation.

Our child received speech therapy and occupational therapy through First Steps. His speech was our main concern. He now speaks very well, better than most children he is around. Our speech therapist was absolutely wonderful. First Steps has helped our son reach the level he should be.

This program has helped our son greatly. We are grateful for all of the assistance from the therapists. They are wonderful people.

All the people have never been condescending or improper.

The First Steps program has been a godsend. It has allowed us to communicate easier with our son. He now has a chance to possibly start school with other children his age.

We are very disappointed in the change of our service coordinator. Our previous coordinator was very helpful and contacted us consistently every month. Our new coordinator contacted us the first time, only after one of our therapists had brought to her attention that it was time for our yearly review. The second time she contacted us, once again, after one of our therapists contacted her, was for our transition meeting. I have been very disappointed by how unimportant my child is to her. If it weren't for him turning three in August, I would be asking for a new coordinator. Thank you

The first service coordinator was replaced at the first of the year because she did not do her job.